THE Hudson REVIEW

E. M. CIORAN:
A Portrait of Civilized Man

JOHN HOLLOWAY:
The Lion Hunt

MARVIN MUDRICK:
Man Alive

MARIUS BEWLEY:
Romanticism Reconsidered

MARVIN COHEN:
My Friend

Poems by LINCOLN KIRSTEIN, MAXINE W. KUMIN, JOHN HAINES, DILYS LAING, DOROTHY ROBERTS.

Articles and Reviews by ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS, JOHN SIMON, HAYDEN CARRUTH, B. H. HAGGIN, KENNETH BURKE, AIME PATRI, RICHARD FOSTER, DENIS DONOGHUE, VIVIAN MERCIER.

VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 1 • SPRING 1964 • $1.50 PER COPY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the field of literature
. . . from ST MARTIN'S

Sean O'Casey:

THE MAN BEHIND THE PLAYS

by Saros Cowasjee

Covering the first forty-six years of the playwright's life, this vigorous biography reveals his human side, and in a study of the plays the author shows how characters and episodes relate to O'Casey's own drama-filled life. $7.50

"Dearest Emmie"

THOMAS HARDY'S LETTERS TO HIS FIRST WIFE

Edited by Carl J. Weber

"An interesting book largely because of Professor Weber's annotations. . . . He makes no exaggerated claims for these letters. [He] values them for the light they cast on Hardy's published work."—*N. Y. Herald Tribune* $5.00

Hamlet

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON STUDIES, VOLUME V

Edited by John Russell Brown

Ten distinguished authorities discuss many aspects of Hamlet's character, attitudes and relationships, psychology in relation to the climate of thought in the Shakespearean era, as well as problems of the play as a whole. $5.75

Hardy's Love Poems

EDITED WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION ON HARDY'S CORNISH ROMANCE

by Carl J. Weber

"The poet's bereavement is here recorded with a beauty, a tenderness and a wistful restraint that attain an effect unique in English literature."—*From the Introduction* *Illustrated* $7.50

Dickens and Education

by Philip Collins

". . . rebuilds the foundation of truth in institutions like Dotheboys Hall and individuals like Mr. Crackle."—*N. Y. Herald Tribune.* "A lively study that provides many insights into Dickens's mind and character as well as a vivid portrait of the age."—*N. Y. Times* $8.25

Essays on Literature and Ideas

by John Wain

"His reading is wide, his mind is independent, he has a generous enthusiasm for what is new in the arts. . . . He has something original to say about almost everything he touches."—(London) *Times Literary Supplement* $5.75

ST MARTIN'S PRESS

175 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOUBLEDAY ANCHOR BOOKS

The first name in quality paperback publishing

THE AMERICAN EARTHQUAKE

By Edmund Wilson. The distinguished scholar and literary critic's firsthand reporting and contemporary essays on America in the 1920s and '30s provide a dramatic human history of the Jazz Age, the Great Depression, and the New Deal. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. calls it "a dazzling panorama of an epoch in our history . . ." $1.95

LAYS OF COURTLY LOVE

In verse translation by Patricia Terry; foreword by Charles W. Dunn. These modern verse translations, capturing the romance and flavor of the original medieval narratives, provide a superb introduction to an important genre of French poetry. *An Anchor Original.* $1.25

THE RADICAL RIGHT

Edited by Daniel Bell. An unusual example of sociological analysis applied to political phenomena, this vastly expanded, updated edition of *The New American Right* includes essays by Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter, David Riesman, Peter Viereck, Talcott Parsons, Nathan Glazer, S. M. Lipset, Alan F. Westin, and Herbert H. Hyman. $1.45

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Revised edition by Theodor Gaster. Dr. Gaster incorporates all of the important new material which has been discovered since his translation of *The Dead Sea Scriptures* was first published in 1956. *An Anchor Original.* $1.45

OF TIME, WORK, AND LEISURE

By Sebastian de Grazia. An impressive, ground-breaking analysis which examines and explodes the modern myth that machines have vastly increased man's "free" time. A Twentieth Century Fund Study. $1.95

At all booksellers or from **DOUBLEDAY ANCHOR BOOKS** *Garden City, New York*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Important new books . . .

VIDA'S CHRISTIAD AND VERGILIAN EPIC

Mario Di Cesare

Among the Latin poems of Marco Girolamo Vida, sixteenth-century Italian humanist, is the *Christiad,* a Vergilian epic on the life of Christ. This study assesses the *Christiad* as an epic poem in its own right, disentangles it from the *Ars poetica,* and thoroughly examines its relationship to Vergil's *Aeneid.* *$7.50*

A GUIDE TO ORIENTAL CLASSICS

Edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Ainslie T. Embree

This book is an invaluable guide to the Islamic, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese classics. In four sections it lists major works, both fiction and non-fiction; background readings; available translations of the individual works; suggested secondary readings; and a list of topics for discussion. *cloth $6.00; paper $2.00*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

CRUSADERS AS CONQUERORS:

The Chronicle of Morea

Translated from the Greek by Harold E. Lurier

The first English version of the Greek chronicle, one from a group of eight accounts recording the history of the principality of Morea, is here presented by Dr. Lurier. This translation ". . . is especially commendable. Lurier succeeds in conveying much of the spirit of the original, which is charmingly naive and altogether French." *—Library Journal* *$7.95*

RENAISSANCE AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

Joseph Anthony Mazzeo

The essays in this volume fall into two groups. The first four turn on problems of metaphor and style in an era in which these problems underwent critical reformulation and reexamination. The second group is about Machiavelli, Machiavellianism, and Andrew Marvel. *$6.50*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS • 2960 Broadway N.Y., N.Y. 10027

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hudson Review

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: *Frederick Morgan*
EDITORS: *Joseph Bennett, Mary Emma Elliott*
MANAGING EDITOR: *Bettie M. Wellons*

VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1964

A Portrait of Civilized Man	E. M. CIORAN	9
The Lion Hunt	JOHN HOLLOWAY	21
Two Poems	LINCOLN KIRSTEIN	44
Twelve Poems	JOHN HAINES	54
Four Poems	MAXINE W. KUMIN	63
Five Poems	DILYS LAING	69
Two Poems	DOROTHY ROBERTS	72
My Friend	MARVIN COHEN	73
Theatre Chronicle	JOHN SIMON	79
Paris Letter	AIME PATRI	89
Music and Ballet Chronicle	B. H. HAGGIN	95
On Form	KENNETH BURKE	103
Reviews		
Man Alive	MARVIN MUDRICK	110
Romanticism Reconsidered	MARIUS BEWLEY	124
The Birth of Character: Scott Fitzgerald	RICHARD FOSTER	132
The Well-Tempered Klavier	DENIS DONOGHUE	138
Everyone's Miscellany	ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS	143
Among Friends	HAYDEN CARRUTH	149
The "Dark" Ages Could Be Golden Too	VIVIAN MERCIER	158

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th St., New York 22, N. Y. Subscription $5.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $5.50. Single copy, $1.50; U. S. Distributor: B. de Boer, 188 High St., Nutley, N. J. Business and subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright © 1964 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Second Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia. Member of The Council of Literary Magazines. Indexed in The International Index. Publication office: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New MERIDIAN paperbacks

The Forms of Things Unknown
By HERBERT READ. A discussion of the creative mind and the pressures to which it is subjected by our technological society. 248 pp. M168 $1.95

Black Reconstruction in America
By W. E. B. DU BOIS. The classic study of the role of American Negroes in post-Civil War Reconstruction. 748 pp. M170 $3.45

Selected Poems of Conrad Aiken
"Poetry second to none in our age."—ALLEN TATE. 288 pp. M177 $1.95

Logic, Computing Machines, and Automation
By ALICE MARY HILTON. A clear explanation of the operation of computing machines and their relationship to mathematics and logic. 449 pp. M171 $2.95

Wilson vs. Lenin
Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917-1918
By ARNO J. MAYER. The New Diplomacy seen against the background of the Soviet Revolution, American involvement in World War I, and the war aims of the major belligerents. 448 pp. M175 $2.95

Available wherever quality paperbacks are sold

MERIDIAN BOOKS
Published by
The World Publishing Company

George P. Elliott

writes provocatively of Books, Beliefs, American Places, and Growing Up in a Strange Country—in his new book

A PIECE OF LETTUCE

$4.95, now at your bookstore

RANDOM HOUSE

Notes on Contributors

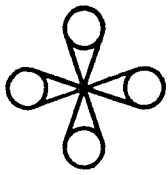
E. M. CIORAN, a Rumanian writer living in Paris, has been praised by a wide range of critics from Alain Bosquet to Francois Mauriac as "the most original living French thinker," "the greatest French prose stylist since Valery," etc. A selection from his second book, *La Tentation d'Exister,* was published in the Winter 1962-63 issue of this Review.

MARTHIEL MATHEWS, the translator of Cioran, has recently completed a novel, *A Region of Time,* a chapter of which appeared in the last issue of THE HUDSON REVIEW.

The poems in this issue by LINCOLN KIRSTEIN will be included in a book of his verse to be published in November by New Directions.

(*Continued on page 123*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



BOLLINGEN SERIES
SPRING 1964

SYMBOLISM IN THE DURA SYNAGOGUE

By ERWIN R. GOODENOUGH. Volumes 9-11 of Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period. An examination of the wall paintings discovered in the third-century synagogue in eastern Syria. 350 *illustrations in monochrome collo*-type, 21 in four-color offset.

February $25.00

SHAMANISM

Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy. By MIRCEA ELIADE. Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. A leading historian of religions explores the role of the medicine man and miracle worker in societies ranging from Central Asia to Oceania and the Americas — making clear, for the first time, the true nature of shamanism and the source of its compelling power.

March $6.00

MAN AND TRANSFORMATION

Edited, with a Foreword, by JOSEPH CAMPBELL. Volume 5 in Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks. Translated by RALPH MANHEIM. The contributors in this volume include Mircea Eliade, Paul Tillich, Daisetz T. Suzuki, and eight other distinguished scholars.

March $5.00

HINDU POLYTHEISM

By ALAIN DANIÉLOU. The Vedic gods, the great Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva trinity, the Goddess Shakti, and the secondary deities in the enormous Hindu pantheon are interpreted as their worshipers envisaged them. 33 halftone plates, with text figures. April $8.50

THE ETERNAL PRESENT

The Beginnings of Architecture. By S. GIEDION. The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1957; Vol. 2. Art and architecture in the first high civilizations of Egypt and Sumer. Illustrated with 345 plates, 18 in color.

May $12.50

NAVAHO RELIGION

A Study of Symbolism. By GLADYS A. REICHARD. New one-volume edition with introduction by Oliver La Farge.

February $5.00

AFRICAN FOLKTALES AND SCULPTURE

Edited, with introductions, by PAUL *RADIN and JAMES JOHNSON* SWEENEY. Photographs by Eliot Elisofon, Walker Evans, and others. New edition. May $10.00

Coming in June:

EUGENE ONEGIN

A 4-volume English edition of the novel in verse by ALEKSANDR PUSHKIN. Translated, with a commentary, by VLADIMIR NABOKOV. Volume 1 contains the first literal translation of this classic ever to appear in English. Volumes 2 and 3 are devoted to Nabokov's commentary, which brilliantly illuminates every nuance. In volume 4, the Russian edition of 1837 is reproduced. With an extensive introduction, two appendices, index.

The 4 volumes, boxed $18.50

Bollingen Series is published by Bollingen Foundation. Distributed by Pantheon Books, 22 East 51st St., New York 22, N. Y. For detailed catalogue write to Bollingen Series, 140 East 62nd Street, New York 21, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By John Holloway

THE LION HUNT

$4.00

Excerpts of this book, to be published in May, appear in this issue of *The Hudson Review*.

THE VICTORIAN SAGE: Studies in Argument. 1962. $6.00

A philosophical analysis of the aims and methods of six nineteenth century English writers: Carlyle, Disraeli, Eliot, Newman, Arnold, and Hardy.

ARCHON BOOKS

60 Connolly Parkway **Hamden, Connecticut**

Coming—in The Hudson Review:

DANILO DOLCI: What Does It Mean, To Die?

ROGER SALE: England's Parnassus

DENNIS LYNDS: A Blue Blonde in the Sky over Pennsylvania *(a story)*

MARVIN MUDRICK: Mailer and Styron: Guests of the Establishment

MAUREEN HOWARD: A Pocket Full of Dreams *(a story)*

HOWARD GREEN: Isak Dinesen

ALAN FRIEDMAN: The Stream of Conscience in Fiction

BENJAMIN DE MOTT: Dirty Words?

FREDERIC MORTON: The Guest *(a story)*

Poems by JEAN GARRIGUE, JAMES DICKEY, ANNE SEXTON, CAROLYN KIZER, RICHMOND LATTIMORE, CHARLES TOMLINSON, ETC.

Chronicles and Reviews by MARIUS BEWLEY, PATRICK CRUTTWELL, DENIS DONOGHUE, NORTHROP FRYE, B. H. HAGGIN, VIVIAN MERCIER, J. MITCHELL MORSE, JOHN SIMON, VERNON YOUNG, ETC.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poems for "the eye and the mind ... as perhaps the best poetry should be."
—CONRAD AIKEN

"Speak to me child as I speak to myself," begins Hy Sobiloff. In the poems which follow, in the book and on the record, Mr. Sobiloff more than justifies Oscar Williams' praise for his "surprisingly enfreshened vocabulary ... genuine love of words ... lines and phrases which delight and astonish."

new poems by Hy Sobiloff is a 12" long-playing record, with 30 poems read by the author, and accompanying text booklet; $5.95 at record dealers, or from Gryphon Records, a division of the Collector's Guild, 507 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10017.

Breathing of First Things, with 100 new poems, is available at all bookstores, $4.95 (paperback, $1.95).

THE DIAL PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Wesleyan Poetry Program

New titles, Spring, 1964

JAMES DICKEY: Helmets (P21)

"We can no longer doubt that we are in the presence of a major talent, a true art." So said the *Hudson Review* of James Dickey's previous book, *Drowning With Others*. This new collection presents his best work of the last three years.

DONALD PETERSEN: The Spectral Boy (P22)

"Excellent, sure, precise, with an easy grace and strength, these are wholly satisfying and solid poems."—VIRGINIA KIRKUS SERVICE. *The Spectral Boy* is Mr. Petersen's first poetry collection.

Each, $4.00 clothbound;
$1.85 paperbound.

Write for a complete list of titles available in the Wesleyan Poetry Program. Teachers may receive books on an examination basis; write for details.

Wesleyan University Press
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT

"The most ingenious and, to my mind, the best long American poem since Paterson."

—**R. W. Flint,**
The New Republic

GUNSIGHT

by Theodore Weiss

Theodore Weiss's third book of poetry is a narrative-dramatic psychological fantasy. A vivid directness in narrative and a rich, concrete eloquence in description unite in *Gunsight* to compose an intricately triumphant poem.

"It would require an essay of some length to detail the achievement of this poem: its rich modulations of voice, its always spontaneous-seeming yet controlled continuities of image and dramatic construction, its vigor."

—**M. L. Rosenthal,**
The Reporter

Signed, limited edition $3.75

Paper edition $1.45

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

Washington Square, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

E. M. CIORAN

A Portrait of Civilized Man

OUR RAGE TO RID THE HUMAN SCENE of everything irregular, unexpected, or mis-shapen, borders on indecency. It may of course be deplorable that certain tribes take pleasure in eating their oversupply of old people, but never will I agree that such picturesque gourmets should be exterminated; after all, we should remember that cannibalism is the very model of a self-sufficient society as well as a practice well suited to appeal one day to a packed planet. However, my aim is not to bemoan the fate of cannibals, harried though they are, living in terror, the great losers in today's world. Let's admit it: their case is not exactly impressive. Anyway, they are on the decline; a hardpressed minority stripped of self-confidence, unable to plead their own cause. The situation of illiterates, on the other hand, is entirely different—that considerable mass attached to its own traditions and privileges, warred upon with an unjustified virulence. Is it an evil, in the end, not to know how to read and write? In all honesty, I do not think so. I will go even farther and say this: when the last illiterate has disappeared, then we can put on mourning for man.

The interest which civilized man takes in the so-called backward peoples is more than suspect. Since he cannot stand himself any longer, he unloads on them the surplus of evils that crush him; he urges them to taste of his miseries, entreats them to tackle a destiny he can no longer face alone. When he thinks how lucky they are not to have "evolved," he resents them with the resentment of a desperado who has been balked and put to rout. What right have they to stay on the sidelines, outside the process of degradation he himself has endured for so long, from which he cannot extricate himself? Civilization, his product and his folly, seems a punishment inflicted on him and he wants to inflict it on others who have so far escaped it. "Come share my calamities; let's be jointly responsible for my hell": this is the meaning of his concern for them, such is the ground of his meddling zeal. Worn by his defects and even more by his "enlightenment," he cannot rest until he has imposed them on people who are happily exempt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is the way he acted even at a time when he was not yet "enlightened" nor weary of himself; he surrendered to his own greed, to his thirst for adventure and infamy. The Spaniards, at the height of their power, must have felt as much oppressed by the demands of their faith as by the strictures of the Church. The Conquest was their revenge.

Are you working to convert someone? If you are, it is not to bring about his salvation, but to make him suffer *as you suffer,* so that he will be exposed to the same ordeals and undergo them with the same irritation. Do you watch and pray, torment yourself? Then let the other do the same, let him sigh, howl, thrash about under the same tortures as you. Intolerance is the condition of ravaged minds whose faith derives from a more or less self-inflicted torment which they hope to see generally practiced and institutionalized. Concern for the happiness of others has never been a driving force nor a principle of action; it is fetched up to salve the conscience or to provide a cover of noble excuses: for no matter what action we undertake, the impulse toward it and its completion is almost always shameful. No one can save another, he can save only himself; and he can do it all the better if he disguises as conviction the misery he wants to give away in such abundance. However wondrous it may appear, the urge to proselyte derives none the less from a dubious generosity, worse in effect than patent aggression. Nobody wants to endure such punishment alone, even though it is willingly accepted, nor by himself sustain the yoke he has agreed to wear. The desire for revenge shows beneath the cheerfulness of the missionary and the apostle. People set about converting others not to liberate but to shackle them.

Let somebody be trapped by a conviction and from that moment he will envy you your indecision, your resistance to dogma and slogans, your blissful incapacity to commit yourself. Blushing in secret for belonging to a sect or a party, ashamed of being in possession of a truth and enslaved by it, he resents, not his declared enemies, the prisoners of another truth, he resents you, the Uncommitted, guilty for not chasing after some truth or other. To escape the kind of slavery he has fallen into, perhaps you take refuge in whim or in vagueness? Then he will do everything in his power to stop you, and to keep you in a servitude analogous and, if possible, identical with his. This phenomenon is so universal it goes beyond the province of conviction to include that of fame

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also. The world of Letters, appropriately enough, furnishes a most painful illustration. What writer who enjoys a certain notoriety does not end by suffering from it, by experiencing the uneasiness of being known and understood, of having a public, however small? Envious of his friends who loll in the comforts of obscurity, he does his best to drag them out, to stir up their peaceful pride so they too will suffer the mortifications and anxieties of success. To him, any maneuver seems legitimate to accomplish this, and from then on their lives are nightmares. He torments them, urges them to produce and exhibit themselves, thwarts their aspiration to a clandestine fame, that great dream of the sensitive and the will-less. Write, publish, he repeats with fury, with effrontery. And the unhappy victims do it without suspecting what lies in store for them. He alone knows. He stalks them, praises their timid efforts violently, extravagantly, with the frenzy of a madman, and, in order to dump them into the abyss of the present, he finds or invents disciples for them, gets them a following of readers, a mob of assassins who are ever present and invisible. His job done, he calms down and disappears, gratified by the spectacle of his protégés in the clutches of the same torment and shame as his, shame and torment summed up perfectly by I forget which Russian writer: "You can go mad at the very thought of being read."

Like the writer stricken and contaminated by celebrity who does his utmost to infect those who aren't yet tainted, so the civilized man, victim of an exacerbated conscience, struggles to pass on its horrors to peoples who resist being split apart as he is. How can he accept their refusal of this self-division that torments and undoes him, how accept their lack of curiosity, their rejection of it? Using all his guile to bring them around, to make them resemble him and undergo his calvary, he entices them with his civilization whose marvels end by so dazzling them that they cannot sort out the good in it from the bad. And they imitate its harmful side only, everything that makes it a preconcerted and systematic curse. Have they been, up till now, inoffensive and carefree? From now on, they want to be strong and menacing, to the great satisfaction of their benefactor who knows that in fact they will become, following his example, strong and menaced. He takes an interest in them, "gives them aid." How comforting to watch them embroil themselves in the same problems as his, as they move off toward the same fate!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All he asks is that they become complicated, obsessed, unhinged. Their youthful fervor for machinery and luxury and the lies of technology reassures him, floods him with pleasure. They swell the numbers of the condemned, of the unhoped-for fellow sufferers who can "aid" him in return by assuming a part of the burden that crushes him, or at least carry as heavy a load as he. He calls this "advancement," a word well chosen to camouflage both his treachery and his wounds.

Shreds of humanity are still to be found only among peoples who have been out-distanced by history and are in no hurry to catch up with it. Staying in the rear-guard and untempted by what other nations are doing, they cultivate their out-moded virtues, make a duty of being out-of-date. "Backward" they surely are, and they would persevere willingly in their stagnation if only they could manage to stay there. But this they are not allowed to do. The plot that the others, the "advanced," hatch against them is too cleverly contrived to be evaded. Once this process of degradation is set in motion, they turn to, with the brashness of the beginner, so as to hurry it up; furious that they can not stop it, they adopt and even compound its horror, in accordance with the law by which a new evil prevails always over an old good. And they want to get up-to-date, if only to show that they too know how to "fall," that in this matter of decline and degradation they can even surpass the others. Why should we be astonished or complain about this? Don't we see counterfeits prevailing everywhere over the essential, and agitation replacing repose? And would we not seem to be witnessing the death-throes of the indestructible? Every step forward, every form of dynamism carries with it something satanic: "progress" is the modern equivalent of the Fall, the profane version of damnation. And those who believe in it and are its promoters, all of us in short, what are we if not an army of the damned, predestined to the Monstrous, to these machines and these cities which we can escape only by an exhaustive disaster? Such a disaster would at least give our inventions a chance, once and for all, to prove their usefulness and re-establish themselves in our eyes.

If "progress" is so great an evil, why don't we stop it, this very instant? But do we really want the good? Isn't it our lot, rather, not really to want it? In our perversity, the "best" is what we want and pursue: ill-starred pursuit, contrary in every way to our felicity. We neither "improve ourselves" nor progress with impunity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Everyone knows that Motion is heresy. That is precisely why we throw ourselves into it and, irremediably depraved, prefer it to the orthodoxy of repose. We were made to vegetate, to blossom in inertia, and not to ruin ourselves with speed and with a hygiene that is responsible for the crop of disembodied and aseptic beings, this anthill of phantoms where everybody wriggles and nobody lives. Since a certain dose of dirt is indispensable to the organism (physiology and body filth are interchangeable terms), the prospect of such cleanliness on a global scale is cause for real alarm. Lousy and serene, we ought to be satisfied with the company of beasts, lying down at their sides during the millennia to come, breathing the odor of the stable instead of the laboratory, dying of our maladies and not of our remedies, turning round about our nothingness and settling down in it, gently. *Vacancy,* which ought to have been a duty and an obsession, has been replaced by action; and each act cuts into us and corrodes us because it occurs at the expense of our equilibrium and our endurance. The more our future contracts, the more we let ourselves sink into what ruins us. Civilization, our drug, has so poisoned us that our dependence on it is an addiction, a mixture of ecstasy and curse. Being what it is, it will finish us off, there is no doubt about that; as for giving it up, freeing ourselves of it, we cannot, today less than ever. Who could fly to our aid and deliver us from it? An Antisthenes, an Epicurus, a Chrysippus? All three found their own civilization too complicated. What would they think of ours, and which among them, transplanted to our cities, would have a core hard enough to preserve his serenity? The people of antiquity, saner and more stable than we in every way, could have got along without wisdom, but they developed it nevertheless. What unfits us forever is that we have neither the desire for wisdom nor the capacity. Is it not significant that the first among moderns to denounce strongly the evils of civilization, and he did it out of idolatry of nature, was the very contrary of a wise man? We owe the diagnosis of our ills to a lunatic more marked and tainted than any of us, to an avowed maniac who was the forerunner and model of our delirium. No less significant seems the recent arrival of psychoanalysis, a sadistic therapeutic devoted to aggravating rather than soothing our ills, and one singularly expert in substituting for our naïve anxiety a malaise that is subtle and over-refined.

By steering us toward the surface of life in order to conceal its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

depths, our wants confer value on that which is worthless and could never be anything else. Civilization with all its apparatus is founded on our inclination for the unreal and the useless. If we would consent to reduce our wants and satisfy only our needs, civilization would crumble at once. For, to survive, it must create new wants and multiply them without end, since the general practice of ataraxia would carry with it far graver consequences than a war of total destruction. By adding gratuitous irritations to the inevitable and natural inconveniences, civilization makes us suffer doubly, diversifying our torments and intensifying our weaknesses. Let nobody try to tell us again that we have been cured of fear. In fact, there is a clear correlation between the multiplication of our wants and the growth of our terrors. Our desires, the source of our wants, create in us a constant apprehension, less bearable by far than the fear felt of a passing danger in the natural world. We no longer tremble occasionally, it is true; we tremble all the time. What have we gained by this transformation of fear into anxiety? And who would balance an occasional panic against one that is permanent, diffused? The security we are so proud of covers up an uninterrupted anxiety that poisons our every moment both past and future, cancelling out the one and making the other inconceivable. As our desires mingle with our terror, happy is he who feels none! For, hardly have we felt one before it produces the other, in a succession lamentable and pernicious. Let us rather strive to submit to the world and consider each impression we receive as an impression *imposed* on us from the outside that does not concern us, and that we endure as if it were not ours. "Nothing belongs to me that happens to me; nothing is mine," says the *I* when convinced it is in the wrong universe, that it is a stranger here and has only one choice, between impassiveness and imposture.

By making us step outside our essence, each desire, interested only in appearances, nails us to a new object and limits our horizon. And our desires allow us, in the same degree that they grow more intense, to detect the morbid thirst from which they emanate. Are they no longer natural? Do they derive from our civilized condition? Fundamentally impure, they disturb and dirty our very substance. Everything that increases our fundamental imperatives, everything that deforms and troubles us unnecessarily is vice. Laughing and even smiling are vices. On the other hand, everything is virtue that leads us to live against the stream of our civiliza-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion, that invites us to compromise and sabotage its progress. Happiness, if the word means anything, consists in aspiring to the minimum and the inefficient, in making our *limits* the basis of our lives. Our only recourse: to renounce not only the fruit of our acts but the acts themselves, to limit ourselves to nonproduction, to leave unexploited a good part of our energies and our opportunities. Guilty as we are of wanting to realize ourselves beyond our capacities and our merits, ineffectual *through over-exertion,* inept at true accomplishment, worthless because of tension, great only in using up and squandering our resources, we spend ourselves without taking account of our true powers and limits. From this comes our weariness, aggravated even by the effort we have expended to adapt ourselves to civilization and all it includes of over-refined corruption. Nature itself is corrupt; that we cannot deny. But its timeless corruption is an immemorial and inevitable evil to which we adapt automatically. The corruption of civilization, the result of our own work and whim and the more crushing because it seems fortuitous, carries with it the mark of choice or of fantasy, of premeditated or arbitrary fatality. Right or wrong, we believe it did not have to happen; that we could have kept it from happening, which makes it seem still more odious than it really is. We are inconsolable for having to endure and face up to the subtle miseries that flow from it when we could have contented ourselves with the crude and, all things considered, bearable miseries nature has generously provided.

If we were ready to root out our desires, we would at the same time free ourselves of our destiny; superior to beings, to things, and to ourselves, stubborn against blending any further with the world, by sacrificing our identity we would achieve liberty, joined as it is to anonymity and to abdication. "*I am nobody!* I have vanquished my name!" he exclaims, the one who will not abase himself further to leave his mark on the world, who tries to follow the injunction of Epicurus: "Conceal your life." We always go back to the men of antiquity when the art of living is in question, an art we have been robbed of by two thousand years of supernature and convulsive charity. We go back to them, to their deliberateness and their moderation, whenever we emerge from this frenzy Christianity has instilled in us; the curiosity they awake in us marks a receding of the fever, a step back towards health. And we go back to them again because the interval separating them from the universe being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vaster than the universe itself, they offer us a kind of detachment not to be found among the saints.

In making frenetics of us, Christianity prepared us in spite of itself to beget a civilization whose victim it has now become: did it not create in us too many needs, too many wants? These wants, these needs, interior in the beginning, gradually became degraded and turned outward, as if the fervor from which so many prayers rose was suddenly suspended and, since it could not disappear nor remain unemployed, put itself at the service of makeshift gods, and invented symbols as empty as they. Here we are, handed over to counterfeits of infinity, to an absolute without metaphysical dimensions, plunged into speed for want of being ecstatics. This panting junk, reflection of our fidgets, and the spectres that manipulate it, this parade of hallucinated automatons, where are they going? what are they looking for? what wind of madness drives them along? Every time I feel inclined to absolve them, when I doubt the legitimacy of my aversion or my terror, I have only to think of country roads on Sunday for the image of those motorized vermin to harden my disgust or my fright. The use of legs being abolished, the walker appears to be an eccentric or an outlaw among these paralytics on wheels; soon he will be taken for a monster. There is no more contact with the soil: everything about it has become foreign and incomprehensible to us. Cut off from all roots, unfit to mix with the dust and the mud, we have achieved the feat of breaking not only with the core but even with the surface of things. Civilization, at this stage, would seem to be a pact with the Devil, had man still a soul to sell.

Is it true that these engines were invented "to save time"? More deprived, more alienated than the troglodyte, civilized man has not one moment to himself; even his leisure is feverish and oppressive; he is a convict on leave who succumbs to the boredom of the *dolce far niente* and the nightmare of beaches. Those who have frequented regions where idleness was the rule and everybody excelled at it, find it hard to adapt to a world where nobody recognizes it or knows how to enjoy it, where nobody breathes. Is a being shackled to a clock a human being? And has he the right to call himself *free* when, as we know, he has shaken off all kinds of servitude except the essential one? At the mercy of the time that he feeds, that he fattens with his own substance, he exhausts himself, bleeds himself to assure the prosperity of a parasite and a tyrant. But he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is calculating in spite of his foolishness, and fancies that his own cares and tribulations will diminish if, under the guise of a "program," he can bestow them on those "under-developed" peoples whom he blames for not being "in the know," that is, caught in the maelstrom. The easier to push them in, he inoculates them with the poison of his anxiety and holds onto them until he observes the first symptoms of its effects. To carry out his dream of a breathless humanity, distracted and minute-conscious, he roves over continents always in search of new victims in order to shed on them the overflow of his feverishness and his inner darkness. In contemplating him we see the very nature of Hell: for is Hell not the place where, throughout eternity, man is condemned to time?

We have subjugated and appropriated the universe in vain, in that by not triumphing over time we have remained slaves. That victory is won by renunciation, but our conquests have made us incapable of that; the more we conquer, the more we are bound. Civilization teaches us how to get things when it ought to initiate us into the art of letting them go, for neither liberty nor "real life" is possible without an apprenticeship in dispossession. When I take possession of an object I imagine I am its master; in fact I am its slave, and slave equally to the instruments I fabricate and manipulate. There is not one acquisition that does not mean one chain the more, nor any instrument of power that is not a cause of weakness. Our very talents contribute to our bondage, and the mind that rises above others is even less free than they; riveted to his abilities and ambitions, prisoner of his talents, he cultivates them at his peril, develops them at the price of his own salvation. Nobody liberates himself if he strives to become someone, or something. All that we possess or produce, all that is superposed on our being or that issues from it, denatures and suffocates us. And as for our Being itself, what a wound to be joined to existence when we could belong, unfragmented, to the virtual and the invulnerable. No one recovers from the evil of being born, capital wound if ever there was one. We accept life and put up with its afflictions only in the hope of someday curing ourselves. The years pass, the wound remains.

The more civilization becomes diversified and complicated, the more we curse the bonds that attach us to it. According to Soloviev, it will come to its end (which, said the Russian philosopher, will be the end of all things) at the high point of the "most refined

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

century." This much is certain, never was it as menaced nor as detested as at the moments it seemed most firmly established. Witness the attacks on it at the peak of the Enlightenment, on its manners and its wonders, on the conquests it took such pride in. "During cultivated centuries, a kind of religion is made of admiring what was admired in cruder times," notes Voltaire, who was hardly one, we must admit, to understand the reasons for so just an enthusiasm. In any case, it was during the epoch of "salons" that the "return to nature" appeared, just as ataraxia could have been conceived only at a time when minds that were weary of digressions and systems preferred the delights of a garden to those of the agora. The appeal to wisdom always comes from a civilization grown weary of itself. Curiously enough, we find it difficult to imagine the process that led the ancient world to satiety, a world which compared with ours seems, at whatever moment of its existence, the ideal object of our regret. As for that, any other epoch whatsoever seems blessed compared with our unspeakable world. By straying from our true destination, we will enter (if we are not already there) the period of the end—a period eminently refined (*complicated* would be the exact word), where we will be, on all levels, the exact opposite of what we should have been.

The evils fixed in our condition have prevailed over what is good, but even if they were in balance our problems would not be resolved. We are here to struggle with life and with death, and not to evade them as our civilization, that enterprise of pretense and glossing over the insoluble, invites us to do. Since our civilization lacks any principle of duration, its advantages, which are so many impasses, help us neither to live better nor to die better. Even if it were able, with the aid of a useless science, to sweep away all our afflictions or, as enticement, award us other planets by way of recompense, it would succeed only in increasing our distrust and exasperation. The more our civilization rushes about and swaggers, the more envious we are of those periods whose privilege was ignorance of the facilities and marvels it endlessly showers on us. "With some bread and a little water, we can be as happy as Jupiter," that sage who counselled us to conceal our lives, loved to repeat. Is it only a fad to keep on citing him? But to whom can we go, of whom can we seek advice? Of our contemporaries? Those frenetic pushers who are guilty of deifying confession, appetite, effort; of making us into lyrical puppets, insatiable and exhausted?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The only excuse for their frenzy is that it derives not from fresh instinct or sincere efforts, but from panic in the face of a blocked horizon. Many of our philosophers who look into the future with fright are only at bottom the interpreters of a humanity which, feeling the minutes escape, tries not to think about them—and thinks about them all the time. Their systems offer, in sum, the image and the discursive unfolding of that obsession. Likewise, History had not roused their interest until a moment when man has every reason to doubt he is still a part of history, that he continues to be its agent. In fact, everything comes to pass as if, history too escaping him, man is beginning a non-historical career, brief and convulsive, which will doubtless reduce to insignificance all the calamities that hitherto he had thought so important. His foothold in Being crumbles with each step forward. We exist only in recoil, by the distance we take from things and from ourselves. To rush about is only to give ourselves over to the false and the fictitious, to discriminate without justification between the possible and the funereal. Restless as we have become, we have ceased to be masters of our acts or of our fate. A negative providence presides over them without any doubt; a providence whose intentions become less and less impenetrable as we approach our end—intentions that would reveal themselves clearly to the first comer if he would deign to stop and step out of his rôle in order to contemplate, if only for an instant, the spectacle of that horde, winded and tragic, of which he is a part.

Everything considered, the period of the end will not be the most refined nor the most complicated; it will be the most hurried, when Being has dissolved into movement, and civilization in a supreme thrust toward the worst, will disintegrate in the vortex it has set in motion. Since nothing can keep it from being engulfed, let us give up exerting our powers against it and learn to distinguish, among the excesses it wallows in, something inspiriting that will enable us to moderate our indignation and re-examine our contempt. These spectres, these automatons, these hallucinated ones will then be less detestable if we reflect on their unconscious motives, on the profound reasons for their frenzy. Do they not feel the delay granted them diminishing day by day and the dénouement taking shape? And is it not to thrust aside this idea that they throw themselves into speed? If they were sure of *another* future, they would have no motive to flee nor to flee from themselves; they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would slow down and settle without fear into an expectant indefiniteness. But for them there is no question of one future or another; they have no future. Out of the racing of their blood rises this obscure unformulated certitude which they dread to face, which they try to forget by hurrying faster and faster, refusing to spend even an instant with themselves. But hidden in this certitude is the ineluctable; and the very speed which, to their minds, should be taking them away from it, brings it closer and closer. Machines are the consequence, not the cause, of so much haste, so much impatience. They do not push civilized man toward his destruction; he invented them because he was already on the way; they are the means, the auxiliaries to get there more quickly, more efficiently. Not content to run, he must *ride* there. In this sense, and this only, can machines be said to allow man to "save time." He distributes them, imposes them on backward peoples, the late-comers, so that they can follow and even out-distance him in his course toward disaster, in the establishment of a universal and mechanical amok. To make sure it comes, he works furiously to level everything, to standardize the human scene, to efface its irregularities and outlaw its surprises. He does not want anomalies to prevail; he wants *the anomaly,* an anomaly monotonous and routine, converted into a rule of conduct, into an imperative. He charges those who escape it with obscurantism or extravagance, and he will not give up until he has driven them back to the straight and narrow path, to his own mistakes. Illiterates, above all, are reluctant to take on these mistakes, but he forces them, obliges them to learn to read and write so that, caught in the trap of learning, not one of them can manage to escape the common misery. His mind is so befogged he cannot even conceive that they might choose a kind of derangement different from his. With no respite for the exercise of self-irony, to which he should be impelled by the simplest insight into his own destiny, he is thus left without recourse against himself. He can become only the more ruinous to others. Aggressive and pitiful at the same time, he arouses a certain pathos. Seeing him inextricably caught, we understand why we hesitate to denounce and attack him, since it is always in bad taste to castigate an incurable, however odious he may be. But if bad taste stops us, how can we make the least judgment on anything whatever?

[*Translated by Marthiel Mathews*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN HOLLOWAY

The Lion Hunt

Extracts from an Essay on Poetry and Reality

HERE IN ATHENS, where light soaks into the body like heat out from an oven, I am surrounded everywhere by the absence of the Parthenon Frieze. From a distance, the Acropolis is dark; rising on an olive-brown huddle of old houses among the scrambling catch-crop of modern Athens. Closer, in only the middle distance, its heart the Temple of Athena is a pale tawny focus of light; bird-cage for, of, the sun. It appears at every corner, at the end of every street. But its missing frieze (whether it should be missing, decide yourself) is not what my mind rests on. Its sunlit lion hue brings another great frieze to mind. The same cool museum galleries, but with one spectator for every twenty at Lord Elgin's loot, treasures the Lion Hunt of Assurbanipal. That marvellous and terrifying work of art I live with daily in imagination.

For many years I have killed nothing save mosquitoes in the act of biting, and the green and black aphids that eat my plants into green snouts. Even the aphids I ignore, or merely blow, when they land on my sunburning skin, and show me their rainbow bodies, lit up I suppose with my poison. In real life the Lion Hunt is not for me. In fact, it is so alien that I have sometimes wondered in what spirit it should be taken. Phalanxes of armoured huntsmen striding for the lions, hip and haunch, thigh and springing instep, muscular hand, massive shoulder, faces heavy with high living and glowing with resolve, with self-assurance for the kill, are not what I should strike out, were I a sculptor, save through hatred for the strong delighting in the death of the weak, for those who are the guardians of life about to massacre it. Who would do otherwise and also be reading this? And if I could have carved the dying lions, transfixed with arrows and pinned to the ground, the convulsions of their bodies, the sight of animal strength brought down to the weakness which (being animal strength) is all it is, it would have been as witness to the evil of their killers, animals themselves though born more.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the moments when I see those great panels like this are moments of weakness and indulgence. The Lion Hunt celebrates the potency of man the killer, his marvellous equipment, strength, ruthlessness, absence of self-doubt and sentimentality, splendid horsemanship, incomparable superiority to the victim, glowing assurance and exhilarated pride, a pride not of lions but of life, before which the strength even of lions bows like grass. It is not the half of life I give my allegiance to, but its opposite.

In a truer sense it is not a half of life at all.

Frieze of the Lions, Frieze of the Virgin—why do I hold to the first of these, and carry it with me as guide and touchstone? Because the Virgin's Frieze is dangerous; dangerous because it can be read wrong. The Parthenon Frieze bows the head. It subdues its people to a broad, grave order. Its youthful riders and slow procession are to a sacrifice and a feast of the Gods. Beasts, men, priests, divinities range one above another, their arrangement the scale and system of the world. And I fear, among the books I must read, things I hear said, questions I answer, world I live in, I fear to be led from art to dogma, and the Virgin's Frieze become no more than that decorous order, subduing and empty, doctrinal, formalized.

There is more indeed to her sculpture than that. The knife-blade intensity of the riders, nervous spiritedness of the horses, massive oxen, giant calm of the gods (what giant calm men can reach, they show) are strong and clear. But they are too easily drowned in a stoneless sea of order and view. Men can *believe* the Parthenon; and believing, forget its art. The Lion Hunt is not for believing but disbelieving. Its order of kings and bodyguards, huntsmen and victims, is by comparison small and wrong. So much the better. So much the clearer its art: for it offers nothing but superb awareness of life, life from which it reflects more light than reality shines direct. Reality, mirrored here, is no longer everything under the sun. It becomes a sun. Its energy burns into the onlooker like the sun on this creamy, fiery terrace as I write. . . .

* * *

Roads and bridges. The modern highway does not run through

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature. Its keyboard of traffic lanes, its cloverleaves and flyovers, close the natural epoch of the planet's superficies. In a traditional landscape the bridges, in their lovely and humble curves, repeat how animals husband the original strength of things; how the foxes' hole or the domed nest of a bird use the ways of the Earth itself. When a modern bridge scorns to arch, and solves its problem with a single, brutal excess of girder, its architect (misnomer now) is no longer the exploiter of nature but its re-designer. The eastern slopes of the Vale of Tempe now wholly take their character from the highway that, swelling and receding, reshapes the entire hillside with its cuttings and bastions; and not far from the meadow of Enna the half-finished super-highway to Corinth ignores even the contour line, and gashes through the hillside, at its own chosen gradient and angle, as independently as if it marked the path of a giant rocket.

These newest rhythms of life bring no mere levelling and standardizing, no mere dreary gloom. Nor cause only for repulsion and terror; nor for crass exhilaration only; but something of terror and of exhilaration too. They make a radical transformation of what life must be lived in, to the extent that survival is once again a genuinely evolutionary task: the survival, that is, of men as the free and senior members of the world, not bewildered, half-conscious subordinates in it. The Lion Hunt is neither to panegyrize nor lament that newness, but to recognize it and to discover the terms on which what is more important than it can survive on a planet it dominates.

I have seen the football-jersey caterpillars of the burnet-moth so proliferated, that they ate their ragwort plant down to a leafless, budless stump. Once I found a column of them, twenty-seven long, nuzzling nose to tail and moving fast across a big patch of bare ground: one dead straight line the length of a snake. But from one ragwort to the next must be less than just so much, or the Burnet Moth (in a previous existence) dies. And humans now, with the resources of now, can make their only planet unfit for human life. Not in the crude way of the neutron bomb, but a place where human life cannot be lived the human way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The archaic insurance against this was that men whom power drove mad went mad. Xerxes whipped the sea and challenged Mount Athos, Caligula withdrew to his island, Peter the Great tortured his son and heir to death, Robespierre had a longing to become High Priest of Reason, Napoleon, bee-fever—a dreary story never twice the same, never really different. But there are other insurances for humanity. One is that efficiency is in the long run self-debilitating: a precious thing, at a time when being not mechanized but organized *into* mechanism is above all what threatens direct vision and first-hand life. Another is that intelligence likes not itself but something simpler and realler. What makes the Rise of the Meritocracy impossible is that those who excel in intelligence tests are not those who would choose, for friends, wives and husbands, those whose only strength is also to excel. The wise opt for the human. Last insurance is the power *over* power of the peptic ulcer, the grey faces of successful politicians, the exhaustion of men after one term of office. To rule humanity is to shorten life: the ruled have a longer expectation.

For humanity to remain human: remain human in a world of administration, re-organization, rationalization, sectionalization, programmatization. Not intellect, logic, science, statistics nor any will-less entity is the enemy, but what the one creature having will does with these or other things in the name of making money, taking power, or (lead, kindly dark) insulation from the dreadful beam of reality. A world of overwhelming resources devoted to insignificant ends; of constant change (the static community as dead now as flint-knapping or the cuneiform) crudified by scale yet directed upon nothings. How can art, how can poetry, survive in *that?*

The world of organizing and of the glad hand now gaily scoops the artist in; for nothing could be more foreign to it than the idea that there are limits to its powers, things to which its whole nature is alien and destructive. Literary prize, writers' congress . . . if committees, receptions, cocktail parties, annual reports, annual budgets, representatives, delegations, fraternal greetings, opening speeches and votes of thanks can make any true contact with art, that cannot be by virtue of what those things are in themselves, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by virtue only of something alien to them which manages to survive within them. Art issues from the organization-world as easily as explorer from tropical thornscrub. Joyce knew this when he made Stephen say that his weapons were silence, exile and cunning. When Newman said that the best he could wish the bishops was "the spoliation of their goods, and martyrdom," he had seen the same fact in another context; the same total difference between the work of the spirit and of the diocese. But we enjoy a ubiquitous, hyperbolical, peach-fed diocesanism. In the past, men have said that the poet improves as a poet if he drinks water and lives simply. Today the more likely prescription would be closer contacts with others and fuller study of the critical periodicals (those *dolori periodici* for which the medical profession provides no pills). For what abuse or defect in any field would our remedy today be not, demand an enquiry, pass legislation, set up a panel, build a new building, set up an Institute, re-organize methods—but, work longer, ask less, think more, trust to time, turn pain into energy through mere character, strengthen that character itself through mastery of pain? The weapons, that is, of men whose one weapon is only, they are men.

Which, at this place where three roads meet, is the bigger devil, that in rainbow colours, or that in black and white? Which is the bigger *now?* . . . . . Let me explain. The devil in rainbow colours is the romanticized idea (it has little to do with any capital-letter use of "Romantic") of poet as handsome, unloved and soulful. An image now no more seductive than that of sadhu or berserk. The devil in black and white (inquisitorial figure) is poet all critical acumen, co-operative enterprise, familiarity with the reigning fashions, seminal figures, formative ideas. Of the two caricatures this is now the dangerous one. More. In a way it is so at all times. The fault of the other is to offer no defence against fake. The fault of this, to hedge over genius: at the worst, simply not to believe it exists. Need more be said? The lost genius is a disaster, the fake poet, one more silly human man.

Many societies are a joyous deluge of art. In them, no one can set his hand (or hers) to anything—pottery, costume, fabric, wood, a song—but the result has beauty and power as well, by an instinct

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spontaneous yet discreet. Such people indeed work with judgement and discrimination; but when they correct or change or reject, it is in a way close and intimate with the work itself. It rubs its corner, is brusque and practical. They do not make their art from a sea of discussion and criticism; rather, from a dry land, a *terra firma,* of none. In our own society every potential work of art, from a napkin to an epic, must rise Polaris-wise from the ocean of discussion, interviews, articles, feature-pieces on this season's new poets, letters to the editor, broadcasts by the critics, cosmeticized pundits on television. Leavis once disparaged Hardy for "precritical innocence." But art that lacks it must find a post-critical innocence instead. Creation is alien to the guilty.

"To be distinguished, and then either chosen or rejected by the judgement." Of course. What makes against art is not the quiet judgement of the artist, but the thousand other judgements vociferating like gulls all round him. Indeed, at its best judgement does more than choose or reject. It contributes, as Arnold knew, to the intellectual atmosphere in which the artist senses, in its first beginnings, what is fruitful and what is not; is itself a kind of vitality ("sharp, revelatory"), kin and twin to creation. But Dryden, for all his coolness and discretion so necessary to a poet, knew also of something else. "A confused mass of thoughts, tumbling over one another in the dark . . . the fancy in its first work, moving the sleeping images of things towards the light." Rilke also:

> You ask if your verses are good . . . You send them to journals. You compare them with other poems, and you are troubled when certain editors reject your efforts. Now I beg you to give all that up. You are looking outwards, and of all things that is what you must not do. Nobody can advise and help you, nobody. There is only one single means. Go inside yourself. Discover the motive that bids you write; examine if it sends its roots down to the deepest places of your heart . . .

No doubt Rilke wrote what his friend Kappus needed to be told; but so do others need it. "If, at any time, you would give me a word of criticism on my mss, I should go with surer feet," Lawrence wrote to Garnett (very early on). But much more often he comes close to what Rilke said:

> I always say, my motto is "Art for my sake." If I *want* to write, I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> write—and if I don't want to, I won't. The difficulty is to find exactly the form one's passion—work is produced by passion with me, like kisses—is it with you?—wants to take . . . These damned old stagers want to train up a child in the way it should grow . . . they want me to have form: that means they want me to have *their* pernicious ossiferous skin-and-grief form, and I won't . . .

Here are more of the red-and-white levelling-staffs that plot out the place and potentialities of poetry; and what they ignore is what we hear enough of. For the ocean of cool intelligence and warm discussion on which we rely for the health of our literary art (not verse alone) comes too near to the ocean of controlling, planning, and rationalizing, of trading many dead words for the one live thing, that is now our stock-in-trade. On the universal planckton of this ocean some creative minds may feed a good deal; others less, others little. But in every case, what they create, whether or not it begins from those waters, must rise clear and free from them, clear as light from coal, rocket from hole. As critics, we become hubristic, and we incline to identify two quite different things. One, the kind of cultural health which means that many people take an interest and pleasure in writing, and judge of it well; the other, the kind that fosters genius (not that it much needs fostering) or at least does not impede it, distract it, or dilute it. Of these two different kinds of health in a society, the most that can be said is that they are far from irreconcilable. But they are radically different. The former is set only upon now. But every work, however modest, if it reaches the level of art is written *for ever*. Gilgamish and Altamira do not "date"; not one stroke, one indented triangle. . . .

* * *

We live in a town where all the great buildings have been slum-cleared. No wonder then, if when life has been impoverished, has been emptied in embarrassment of whatever is great and abundant and unselfconscious, men are ill-satisfied to think of art as its mirror, and want art not to reflect that dishclout, but purge it, tidy it, set it to rights. Of a piece with our craze everywhere to organize. But we organize what has lost its relish. And against that restless, dissatisfied, ultimately neurotic "What *for*? What ultimately *for*?" —Rilke:

> . . . So you must not be frightened, dear Herr Kappus, when a sor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> row rises up before you, greater than you have ever seen; when a restlessness like light and cloud shadows passes over your hands and over all your doing. You must think that something is happening upon you, that life has not forgotten you, that it holds you in its hand . . . Why do you want to plague yourself with the question where has it all come from and whither is it tending?

and Keats:

> . . . at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean, Negative Capability, *that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason* . . .

Fact and reason about the order and coherence of life are not to be first fretted after, then relaxed on. Slowly, they change for a man throughout his active life. And to fret and ache for them is to forget Chekhov's "life is given only once" . . . more than that, life is *even* given once, even *given*. Health cannot ache: not even to comprehend itself.

To think about experience is itself an experience. If the thoughts are true, they have value for their truth. Whether they are true or false, they have value as the active use of our powers, as an experiencing of our own vitality and perseverence. If not fruitful, at least they fructify. Art, also, is not simply either a picture of life, or a commentary or an interpretation. *In the first place, it is life.* It is enjoyed; more, almost, in the sense in which we enjoy a right, than a sweet; and thus it is experienced, it fills time. Read a poem, watch a play, enjoy a painting, listen to music, time has passed, the sun cannot be called back across the sky. Sun, work, talk, art and the rest, all equally in substance if not in duration, occupy the span between sleep and sleep. Art first impinges on life not by judgement but simple occupancy; "is part of life," first, in that simple sense. . . .

* * *

A poem is one of the things in the world, and we heed it because we are alive. As they walk in my street, men stop to gaze at a great pine tree, and go on a little the better for having seen its size and order.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The simple way to say this: art is first-hand in life, not second-hand. There are hours left over after men have got food, warmth, safety; and then the making of art for others, and using it from others, are among the things which fill and enhance the species' time. If we forget this, it is through reeling from assault and battery before a mob of other things which offer to take up that time—but as brigands, zanies and usurpers. The "media of mass-communication" are misnamed. Their intention is not to communicate, but to create a simulacrum of communication which diverts—diversion, the word is exact—from communication. In these conditions, the more thoughtful and perceptive become ill at ease with any mere occupier of time: strive to re-cast art into the image of what dominates their culture. They dress the artist in the robes (rags they are, for him) of the journalist, administrator, politician and abuse-righter. Lost before the thought of a life filled with natural wholeness and first-hand, effortless richness, they sanctify their anxiety, prostrate themselves before their tribal gods. . . .

* * *

Poets have always been thought of as teachers ("I desire to be thought of as a teacher or as nothing," said Wordsworth). To teach is not the essence of the poem, but it can run easily alongside what makes the poem poem. Yet to go back more than two hundred years is to find the poet's work as teacher seen in a light wholly different from how men see it today. On any terms, the minor part of being a moral teacher is the uttering (abstractly, concretely, how you like) of moral maxims. He who does only this cannot but be a minor teacher. The major part is the conveying of a vision of reality from which those norms do not indeed follow (no fact entails a value) but within which they have a place, seemly parts of a capacious whole. How men should live being what they are; and that, part of the world they inhabit.

Until the time of Rousseau, Goethe, Blake, poets in whose work the "moral"—in this widest and humane sense—played a large part wrote from a conviction which all their fellows shared: that truth about what the world was like, and therefore how men should live in it, was known. It was known because God (and also, to some smaller extent, classical literature: taste of logic more than fact)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had provided the information. Montaigne may have been the first man in Europe who doubted this knownness; but the first to toil towards discovery was Spinoza. Descartes knew the feeling of total uncertainity, but the suave man sold out. Spinoza embarked alone upon that voyage of spiritual exploration, without one star, which was later followed by every thinking man of his continent. With Rousseau, Goethe and Blake, the writers followed the philosophers; taking with them their different and perhaps on balance better equipment for the journey. The new poetic task entered the very form of their work. *Tiriel, The Prelude, The Ancient Mariner, Adonais,* the new lines in *The Fall of Hyperion* are all, in one way or another, in a new poetic form: that of a journey which becomes a journey in search of truth unknown. Part for good, part for ill, the new poetic rôle established itself. One poet after another became like

> . . . that William Blake
> Who beat upon the wall
> Till truth obeyed his call

—or thought he did. As all certainty died and the world moved faster, it came more and more to seem that the poet's task was to strike out the terms of life afresh, to see first-hand, for himself, and from a human condition of ignorance, into the mystery or rather the new, the newly-seen mystery of life.

But the idea of the poet as a man who has undertaken this lonely spiritual adventure, confronting life anew at its most radical level, is one thing; the idea of him as rhyming responder to sensational events of his time (though why always bad ones, never good?) is another. Yet, though wholly different, they are related; and the relation can be seen; it is that between what is original and fundamental, and what is at the level of current affairs and public gossip. It marks, once again, our decline from the world of the artist to that of the problemizer and organizer. Decline characteristic of our age, and showing in it hundred-handed, hundred-eyed.

Yet is there point in arguing whether, over the whole course of our poetry, poets have been concerned with the major horrors of their time?—as in Chaucer's account of the Black Death, and of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Timur's destruction of the oldest and by then greatest Aryan civilization? or Donne's verse letters on the massacres in Ireland and beginning of the witch-hunts? or Marvell's response to Cromwell's expropriations, and the whole of central Europe depopulated in the years before 1648? or Pope's terrible picture of England in 1738 (why, he wrote a poem with that very title), when for the first time in four centuries men died more rapidly than they were born? or Hopkins on the Armenian holocaust? (Surely, surely . . . only a year before he had written his longest, perhaps grestest poem, when five nuns were drowned) . . . or Eliot's response to the vast negation of life in the English depressed areas and the vaster negation of it abroad? Another lonely parcel at the bottom of a basket . . .

Better to search, in quietness, in humility, for how in truth it is that the poet will write as a man of his own time, and not any past time. For he will.

The "thund'ring tube" of Thomson, "ringing grooves" of Tennyson, are not tedious. True, they show, in their poetic diction, men unable to see part of their own world with a direct and unselfconscious eye. But they also show men at work on one of men's perennial tasks: to rethink their world into an image which makes life acceptable. It is a historical interest; but that is exactly what makes it a human one. Just as foxes find holes in the rocks, so men, at their level, must make their lives a life. Only, the self-conscious and mediating vision turns out uneasy art. In the past, it has often seemed easy to write verse about long-established subjects (love, nature) and difficult to do so about something (like a motorbicycle, say) which had not got into verse before. The Georgian poets made a modest effort to break through these restrictions (until recently, our criticism has identified them with their creation . . .) and the much more radical poets who succeeded them began to make those long-established subjects seem as inept as their opposites had seemed until then. The old man went in and the old lady came out: the poetical weather, in one sense, changed little. In another, the motorbicycle now seemed safe for poets, and love and sunsets the things to crash with. Once again men staggered from extreme to extreme.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But to either pre- or proscribe subjects to the poet is sterile. The Lion Hunt has already identified what part of life means writing programmes for people, organizing their lives, setting all to moribund rights. It might indeed be possible to use these methods of the averaged remedy, for the average poet: but what meaning has that phrase? Everyone knows—though many hate to have to say—that poetry does not come from planning and calculating. It draws on these—of course it does, it is art—on its route from birth to full development. But it comes from the imagination. Which, everyone also knows, feeds not on recipes and remedies, but on the food itself: the whole deep crust and mantle of the senses. And what parts of experience will kindle a writer's mind to the uninsistent luminosity, the glimmering explosion when sperm strikes egg for a poem, is beyond prediction or control. It is the writer himself who will sense, by intuition or his finest intelligence as men like to call it, what to begin work on, and what not. Nor need it be the most powerful and disturbing events in his world, even in his own life, which best flow forward into poems. But he will have the patience and the ease, as well as the insistence, of the creator. He can go easy as well as hard; can wait, can sacrifice, can even suppress for ever. He knows the fluency of the deeper springs, the big reservoirs of their dark table. He need not blacken his fingernails stooping at every fetching pool.

Demands that the poet write on this, write on that, are the bottle thrown into the sea. Perhaps, perhaps, they may re-direct the mind of a poet here, a poet there. Underground rivers are uncharted, no one quite knows what deflects them. Yet it is not easy to see a poet turning to the crisis of our time, on instructions from its literary administration, unless he was on the point of doing so, for himself, before.

It would be childish to think either that crisis has played more than a minute part in the millennia of poetry hitherto, or that we have more crises than our ancestors. Because there are more of us we have them on a wider scale, and each is efficiently magnified by those whose interest is to do so. But what men have known as their civilization has always been first fitful and then destroyed. Troy, Carthage, Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople. Basil's army of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blinded Bulgars. Provençal poetry that arose among the annihilated Albigensians, and at a time when nothing save chance could have stopped the Mongols. Timur's mountain of skulls. Montezuma. There is no Homer of the Dorian Invasion, no epic of the last men in Greenland. Even when verse has touched on the destruction of whole societies, its touch has been tangential, almost accidental. Why? Because it touches these things only when the general event chances to have been also a personal event for a true poet. Out of the Saxon world destroyed by the Norse came the little scuffle and great poem of *Maldon*. Not Châlons, decisive battle of Europe, but a little rearguard botch at Roncesvalles, created the *Roland*. Men do not live in the crisis of their time; but just removed. When this ceases to be so is not when they write, but when they are destroyed. They write out of life: which is not crisis, but a moment's lucid freedom from it. . . .

* * *

How difficult it is to gain a sense of the big, slow changes of consciousness whose smallest unit of measurement is the generation . . . a covert but decisive slowness. Wordsworth did not create his vision of reality. Perhaps its ultimate creation passes out of the hands of poets altogether, into those of Leibnitz and Newton. (Despite Shelley, poetry is sometimes in front of the moving line of human thought, but often it borrows and develops what came first elsewhere.) In Thomson, and even partly in Pope, something of the very distinctiveness and detail of the Wordsworthian vision is present. But in Wordsworth himself it is transfigured: through and through it bears the stamp of deep and long-continued experience. His motion and spirit that rolled through all things, quiet yet strong and formative, was something within which all he met in life could be ordered: a girl singing, flowers in the wind, a mountain sunrise, a child, a pensioner in the days of no pensions. The vision was a field; no bright flick.

As visions will, it shrank. For a hundred years. Too slowly for eyes to see the change.

> A spirit haunts the year's last hours
> Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tennyson's spirit still pervades Nature. But instead of strong, formative, humane, it is shy and recessive and ghostlike. A spirit not of Nature but of merely autumn. For Andrew Young, a hundred years after Wordsworth, it had shrivelled again:

> When the long, varnished buds of beech
> Point out beyond their reach,
> And tanned by summer suns,
> Leaves of black bryony turn bronze,
> . . . I never lose the feeling
> That someone close behind is stealing
> Or else in front has disappeared;
> Though nothing I have seen or heard,
> The fear of what I might have met
> Makes me still walk beneath these boughs
> With cautious steps as in a haunted house.

The hand of Tennyson is plain in those varnished buds (though he'd not have passed bronze for the half-darkened bryony: what it matures must be the aubergine-chemical, not—Young's lazy source—that of the bronzing beech-leaf). But the homage to Wordsworth, clearly enough there, has grown so small a cry it seems derision. From spirit to spook.

But where the vision shrivelled, and where it did not, still it remained what vision there was if there was any. Insofar as the writer had a comprehensive sense of life and the environment of life, it was this one. For Hardy—'twas Nature still, but Nature methodized. He learnt from natural historian and sociologist, so he saw more law in Nature and less benevolence. But in its austere and unbending way, it was more benevolent than anything else. The lives of its submissive children were valid, as those of rootless townee or *nouveau-riche* were not. Lawrence stands in a profound continuity with Wordsworth. As a novelist, he cared for other things also. He could see the weave of society, and even (learning a little from the Realists, though he shunned them much more) the half-objective laws which work through society and shape men's lives beyond men's choice. The later pages of *The Rainbow* show men and women forced away from their forebears' simple rhythms into a complex modern society. But the early pages, and the close

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *St. Mawr* or *The Lost Girl,* show how Lawrence also believed in a deep re-vivifying force reaching man from the archaic community, or the world surrounding it.

Not uninsistent, pastoral, moral, as in Wordsworth, but much more vigorous and sensual; yet with Wordsworth for all that. And even Pound in the *Cantos*. So blurred is this poem that the sense of life in it has been left alone by its advocates. Far easier to praise a rhythm or a trick, or daub others. But if it has a vision of life, it has one of men who live well when they live within traditional community, stolid Cincinnatus-like integrity, steady labour, and deference to the qualities of things around them: landscape, water, stone. When they live ill, it is through breaking with these for townee guile and easy lucre.

But there is another axis, as it were, in Pound's work: a sense of the beautiful and a sense of the poignant; and it goes back (via Swinburne!) to Keats:

> Passion you breed a form in a shimmer of rain-blur;
> But Eros drowned, drowned, heavy, half-dead with tears
> For dead Sycheus.
>
> *. . . lisp of leaves and ripple of rain,*
> *And the brown bright nightingale amorous*
> *Is half assuaged for Itylus.*
>
> *. . . the sedge has withered from the lake*
> *And no birds sing.*

or again:

> And the small stars now fall from the olive branch,
> Forked shadow falls dark on the terrace
> More black than the floating martin
> that has no care for your presence,
> His wing-print is black on the roof-tiles
> And the print is gone with his cry.
>
> *I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,*
> *Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs . . .*
>
> *. . . no light*
> *Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Man in a Nature austere and formative, and a noble sincerity of vernacular to say so; in a Nature heavy with beauty and poignancy, and a subtle, embodying particularity for saying so. Wordsworth and Keats. We have learnt some new tunes, and some of theirs have fallen silent; but it is still their ample and carilloning world through which our poetry moves. Attenuating it, modifying it, modifying it even with its social-science, quasi-opposite, it is still the Romantic Movement of which we are a part.

Attenuating it. Not only as the line ran from Wordsworth through Tennyson to Young, but in other ways too, the years pass and the spacious vision shrinks. . . .

* * *

The time has come to see why this is so. And it is so, because in a world where men can farm the sea, mutilate the earth's upper atmosphere, control the water-tables inside its mountains, drench its landscapes with aerial spray, or transform them with ribboning concrete and winter wheat, the deep formativeness is a parody; and the marvellous beauty an embarrassment . . . Homer's god-like bronze to the Dorians. Nor is it enough to extend the vision of Wordsworth, as Hardy extended it: bringing social science and natural history to life, and seeing Nature moulding Man's affairs as not spirit only but system also. Now, the task is not one of extension, but reversal.

Microcosm and macrocosm have changed places. Man is the Big World made cunningly; and his environment—his plaything he could so easily think—the Little one. For centuries men believed that the whole earth was a single great living creature. It was not. Thinking this, they did not see its grand objectivity, its order (of both life and lifelessness) more spacious, leisurely and severe than that of any organism. The storm at sea whose grandeur was in reality to be mere cold plottable variation, they misread as anger of earth or god (which, makes no difference). But now, the idea is in a sense apt. The men of the chipped flints tamed the hunting dog, those of the polished flints and women's gardens the ox, sheep and so on. We ourselves have made of the planet, and perhaps of more than the planet, something like a vast domesticated animal. Not that, because of this, men live any the less within the larger pat-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terns of powers which run both through and beyond the human. Altamira Man did not make his hunting dog immortal, or more or less than it was. But he controlled its surface life. He trained it to be as he wished. So can we, do we, our planet. About any Wordsworthian wise passiveness there must then be something of the purblind and *voulu*.

Man not is, but *has*, a Little World made cunningly . . . by himself.

Now perhaps the Lion Hunt makes for open ground: but on the condition that it endues with high magnification the views of Polixenes:

> Yet nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean; so over that art
> Which you say adds to nature, is an art
> That nature makes . . . . . an art
> Which does mend nature—change it rather; but
> The art itself is nature.

"Man in Nature" is now a phrase with a jumble for a meaning. The ape is no longer in the cage when he is building castles with the disjointed bars. But Man *as* Nature, as himself Nature. The deep formativeness, even the marvellous beauty, within.

As Lawrence knew. But if Man *is* Nature, so much more is within him, besides those two things. Shelley saw more, in one way, than either Keats or Wordsworth did: saw, beyond Nature's beauty and its forming influence, its immensity of independent power, neither kind nor cruel, but radiant with intense, self-transforming, ever-varying energy. As the false clash between imagination and science grew harsher, this part of his vision has come to seem less and less an integral of his poetry, and more and more some mere "interest" to be grubbed out by would-be doctorate-writers. Moreover, Shelley has bored us for his lack (supposedly) of the concreteness which we so much care for; and for his inferiority to Wordsworth as a moralist (though how can anything be seen by the imagination, save in a moral way? To see the world is a moral activity in itself, and among the highest). Result, this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

least sentimental part of what the Romantic poets saw has been least associated with "Romanticism," and least retained in the imagination as it is fed by literature today. . . .

* * *

The three great duties which lie before men in the present are to learn the absolute nothingness of any difference between humans save that between good and evil (race, religion . . . no one deserves to have the disgusting list so much as recapitulated); to recognize the new duty of an all-powerful *homo sapiens,* custodian of a precarious, self-made Eden, to undertake the guardianship of all planetary life (when he was no more than one among its species, he might fend for himself, no more); and to realize that it now lies in his power alone to surround his existence with order and beauty. Even as late as the industrial societies of the early nineteenth century, the natural environment could sustain order and beauty, despite his own worst efforts, at least up into the middle distance. Self-evidently, these three things are not yet to be learned from literature. They must be learnt by contemplation of a new reality, perhaps of an even as yet not wholly formed reality. But how little they have been learnt at all!

Not mend but change. . . . certainly, if Man is the Big World and Nature the Little, this does not make the earth an Eden in any sense but one: the reverse rather. *Quærens quem devoret.* If it was a haunted place before, now it is more so. Its ancient horrors still here, but in their new dress, erect amid their circling spires, like Milton's serpent; and now, primarily, internal to man. Men's storms bigger, beasts fiercer, famines crueller and more calculated, than Old Nature's ever were . . .

* * *

Immensities of greatness, resource . . . and guilt;—but the hands of the woodman glide, in the swing, up the haft. The axe is a tool, a tool has its law. Man the New Nature does not rattle Old Nature as a child its toy. He grows it. He follows its law, gardener once again. Its big, leisurely, even archaic continuities merge down into his futurist world. Across the new superhighway the goats suddenly curl, swirl and scamper, to re-form in their unhurriedness

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the hillside pasture. As I hurtle past I hear a snatch of the goat-boy's song: the scale it is in is a scale I shall never be able to sing: I lost it when Bach tempered the clavier. The small flowers of that hillside will not grow again all at once—but in a hundred years or some other *mauvais quart d'heure* they will. Old, new, still, change . . . there will never be a present any more; nor anything tidy any more; nor order save among the fragments of many past and plainer orders, a *Palmyra* of spacious and noble ruin; and our order lies in that. Here, for a whole month of glittering sunlight, a wind roars unbroken from the Carpathians to Africa; and the land roars with it, image of the time.

Not rootlessness, though: unrootedness rather. Men, as if giant orchids, have air-roots; or rather, must now have them . . . form them unbedded from their total response to life, and strike with them in a moment on the minute flower-bed of wherever the sole checks . . .

No clock-golf art mirrors a world like this. What art does? . . . Kandinsky. Canetti. Mies van der Rohe. Schoenberg. Mondrian. Soutine. Tamayo. Bacon. Sutherland. Pollock. Nolan. Reverberating to the long fundamentals of Now: Now's audacity of scale, violent self-containment, iconoclastic but re-creative energy. That art is in this, this world.

And in poetry? . . . . . .

Against these images of major and magisterial art, what diminutive silhouette is stood up now by our English verse! . . . and what midget anxiety by our criticism! Roaring highway, trim front garden, green clock: criticism busy with everything but the giant and transformed image of reality. "My own interest in this kind of particularity is mild indeed . . ."

Yet (vision of reality, vision of language) there is a record of that reality already present in the state of the language. As I said before (though what Lion Hunt ought to stop for the history behind it?) our generation is one of poets and critics who swear blind that poetry is language, poetry is language, but who stay

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blind to what our language now is, what it has been, how others differ, what are its innermost powers. It lies before us in ruins ("something *terribly* hard . . . in recreating *rather* abstract states of mind," well-known critic lets into print) . . . the language lies before us in ruins, and we close our eyes to that grandiose and lamentable Palmyra . . .

* * *

The eighteenth century had one language and one only. Newssheets, sermons, literature, manuals of horsebreeding and tree-growing all used the same homogeneous diction: easy, elegant, contained. The language could rise or fall, but it did not divide; and behind the single diction lay a singleness of vision. Or rather, the di-vision had only just begun. Beattie advocates Ossian in the language of Hume, but Macpherson did not translate him into that language (could not have); and between the sane (dull) verse of Smart, and his inspired verse, for which I don't know the word but it isn't sane, the di-vision opens again.

"In God's name, let us have the freedom of our language," wrote Spenser's schoolmaster (not that his best pupil supplied it overmuch). But today, every Englishman with the freedom of our language has the freedom of a quiverful. What is in that quiver? At one extreme, something which is our legacy from Shakespeare and above all the Authorized Version. The stratum that we think of as proverb or plainest idiom is rich from them. "For a while I held my tongue"; "great men are not always wise"; "their strength is to sit still." The eighteenth century lost this bluntness and homely plainness; for that time it was an English of reading (they read their Bibles more ever than we do) but it was not an English for writing. We have paid a heavy price enough, but this at least we have won back. Swift, nearest to it of the eighteenth century, had still moved from it:

> I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked or boiled . . .

I do not say that anyone today can write as well as Swift or Shakespeare; but those two modes of writing are open to us; as Caxton's,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for example, is not, and as they have not been, not together, before the conglomeration and the lively ruin of the present.

Conglomeration, because they are far from alone. Also to hand (too easily, sometimes) is the new intellectual style of the nineteenth century, when the quantitative sciences filled our prose with things like "in accordance with" and "in proportion to," and "relatively," and clustered our diction with abstracts behind which lay the realities of measurement (*interdependent,* 1817; *extrapolation,* 1878; *median,* 1894). And in almost that very year it was, that Frank Harris reached rock bottom in yellow journalism, helping (with many others) to create the newspaper vernacular of today . . . a top man did a unique job, looking in on a night of firsts, and handling the story with that little extra; but the lack of opportunity hit him . . . and he was a worried man, learning to live with your hundred best tunes. No one so exalted that he refrains from the style, from telling us we've never had it so good. The head of a major Cambridge college recently wrote, in reviewing a book, of its author's having landed a bolo-punch. There is nothing dull or archaic about any of *us.*

So this too, as well as the others, has joined the standard resources of the tongue: and here is how one contemporary critic, in a serious discussion of contemporary poetry, proves that it is what he is at home with:

> It seems to me that what you are trying to say in this idea . . . is that there is no further answer . . . but you know what I mean . . . the point is that the job is a more complicated and responsible one . . . to move smack into your domain . . . he is a very good test case . . . I mean, there he is . . . one has simply got to say that the seeds of the concentration camps are in us all . . . one of the bones of contention . . . I think fundamentally . . . all sensitive people nowadays are in the same boat. In the same ghastly position. We are all standing there with our hands against this stone wall against which there presses, on the other side, a flood tide of neurosis . . . I'm very pro the frame of reference.

So we have God, in the Authorized Version, at one extreme, and, well, I mean, there he is, this critic, at the other end, standing in his boat, and holding up the flood tide, all in one and the same frame of reference.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet in this splitter of dictions, Palmyra, yes, of a once integrated and imperial language, may lie the potency of poetry truly to reflect the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Our reality is a great disruptive openness where many realities, from archaic to newfangle, jostle together; and our language of today is the same. In it too, through it, runs this harsh rainbow of broken order, scattered energy, restless change, creative vulgarity, violent potential. In its fullness, our language is already the waiting mirror of the world we have. Mirror of language, waiting to be fused, released, as river of poem.

Most, or all, contemporary British verse seems to be verse written along the minor axis of poetry: a verse of assumptions and acceptances rather than of exploring and meditating; of resting not running. Since Eliot, the poet has been seen as defender and even reformer of language; but this has meant only a loose and unenquiring respect for the "real language spoken by men"; and what this meant has gone unquestioned too, so that "vernacular" English has signified how persons who have graduated in English talk when they have not lost their calm or temper. If the poet achieves this, he grants the takings-for-granted of his time, and can rest on his laurelettes. "Mr. X.," writes another well-known and highly successful reviewer, "has adopted that 'colloquial tone' which in his last book he disdained . . . and as a result his verse has become refreshingly readable." The refreshment of *poetry*? Result just of that??

To most poets today, it seems enough to isolate out one line from the language spectrum, and write in the decorum of the unaggressively, unembarrassingly colloquial. And by the same token, to write from observation of reality, not vision of it: that is, to settle for the careful record of what reality falls our way, not sense the fundamental in the chord of all reality. A valid proceeding in a way. The minor style, the minor axis, that emerges from our language-Palmyra and reality-Palmyra. When all the doors and windows of the house fly open in a gale, to maintain one small room as a clean, well-lighted place. But careful record of fact, sensible plain diction for recording fact . . . it is still the dusty image of our time, it can lie upon the administrator's desk

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without making him wonder whether his kind of life is life at all. Major poetry cannot.

"Levels of reality": but they are not levels, and save married into their fluctuating togetherness are not reality. Many dimensions rather; a world beyond any visual image; the space of the Lion a complex variable. Nor does contemporary reality form as vision in any wooden elaboration of meanings, any mechanism of the "deeper" (he who digs a pit), any organization of allegory. They will not create a style contemporary with the only true contemporaneity: which is to issue from, and be apt for, what is contemporary in the world. Rather, such a using of the language-Palmyra, such a meditation on the language-Palmyra, such a mastery and ultimate going beyond, as comes from seeing that world's asymmetry, idiosyncrasy. Oscillation between the trite and the nightmare; order replaced by its own collapse, and back again, in an eyewink. Archaic, modernistic; grotesque, grandiose, serenely lyrical, trivially squalid; and always change, change, but precarious balance, yet overwhelming power, with sudden collapse, next phoenix recovery. A world shot through with its own reflections in a giant distorting mirror: where every pass, road and gate stand open, yet everywhere is potent with beautiful sophistications of repose (great shipyards by the meadow of Enna, the miles of bathers, the daily jet). A world which is at every turn both symbol of itself, and inescapable reality: the visionary gleam become a universal cascade of fractured and fracturing light.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

Tudoresque

I adore the glory of England. When I was a scamp at school,
The poet, James Agee
And I listed the names of English kings, dates of their ev'ry rule,
(Exeter's Library);
Sketched coats-of-arms with sable bend or sometimes a sinister bar,
Baron and baronet;
We savoured the fame of Tower jewel, Kohinoor and India's Star.
Late afternoons we met
To devour the epic of England in antique magazine-views,
(Periodical Stacks),
In leather-backed rusty volumes of "The Illustrated London News."
My first Shakespeare contacts
Were Jim's reading parts from The Histories aloud prompt as current-events.
Favourite rôles were those
Of Bolingbroke, Hal and Hotspur in bloody fine incidents
Where bled the Tudor rose
Within the bosom of lover and friend: Prince Hamlet, Horatio.

Often Hamlet was Jim;
We got drunk on Shakespeare's iambics and Britain's historic rainbow.
I shall remember him
Flipping the pages of portraits vignetted for "The London News":
Their First War's English dead,
Glorious young men all, each a university graduate.
Death haloed every head,
All officers, baron or baronet, not one lowly private;
History was alive.
Jim had such charm as Hamlet I was content as Horatio a friend,
On four days out of five
Though always I deem myself Denmark and must play him to the end.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At Harvard before long,
The casting is switched by Agee. He prepares the high comic schools;
Sings us another song:
The chilly end of "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Twelfth Night's" solemn fools
Whilst Jim, setting forth strong
Read me his own sugared sonnets which sounded like pure poetry
Back then as they still do
And Agee will dwell in English verse and as for merely me
In footnotes I'll dwell too
For having first printed his poems in the quarterly "Hound & Horn",—
(A quote from Ezra Pound
We revered in 1926 e'er most Young-Poets were born).
Long since I've turned around;
I've had my fill of Harvard and its Twentieth Century Men;
Theodore Spencer's dead
Who taught us The Age Of Shakespeare and his polymath Shakespeare then
Was less of heart than head;
Our tutor was friend to Eliot, a Nineteenth Century man
From the Seventeenth Century
So when we rewrote us our verses, our stanzas were wont to scan.

What meant England to me
Apart from bards on Widener shelves and Jim Agee's brandied voice?

Britain, its earth as well.
My people gave me a pilgrim's scrip, bade me make a scholar's choice:
Tintagil's drear hotel;
Its Table-Round of Morris fumed-oak besprent with thumbed Debrett's;
Cathedral Close at Wells
Where paddled a pride of white marble swans with invisible coronets,
Tugged at the moat-house bells.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And I scaled the heights of Bloomsbury. I took rooms in Russell Square.
I found some English friends.
At dazzling soirées Lytton, Maynard, Clive and Virginia are there.
Lydia superintends
Our pas de deux. Lopokova and I perform a world-premiere
When I'm but sweet sixteen
For the London Seasons between-the-wars were Heaven, and Vanity Fair,
The like since seldom seen.
At the top of St. James Street, silence. Crowds hush at gilt rattling brass:
The Household Cavalry.
An open coach thrones George The Fifth. From Paul's I see him pass:
"God Bless Your Majesty . . ."
His mask salvaged from mortal ill, very model of some carved King.

He also is My king.
So here I am back in the ole U.K. endeavoring for to bring
Whatever decent thing
I can to repay my bad British debts to English poesie.
It isn't hard at all.
England encourages Allies with hearts and hearths and I
Am billeted in call
Of Third Army Headquarters, leased by a kind P.O. Employee
In Manchester's suburb.
Though it's a tiny Tudoresque villa he's cleared some room for me.
The service is superb.
From Invasion-Exercises I drag in bushed. Always there he waits,
Tea on his hob and toast.
We prattle of the state of England and my own United States;
We make an Allied boast
Of our present fierce alliance and what futures we're fighting for.
I tote him P.X. gum
For the brats of his son at sea who's actually winning this war.
Splicing a brace of rum
Since his boy's been absent from home five year, deep drink we to his luck,—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An Officer no less,—
A tall fair youth with starry eyes like Raleigh or Rupert Brooke;
(These snapshots show me this).
"The Illustrated London News" taught me his specific look
From World War No. 1;
And declares my P.O. employee: Old England's come very far;
Now, often things are done
Unthinkable thirty years ago when he fought his Private's war:
"Officer, me? My eye!"
Yet look at his own Bertie now. Here's Bert's Mother at the door:
"Daad, coöm ta baid," hence I
Apologise for keeping him up. It's not that she hates us Yanks.
She wishes we'd go home
Though courteous as can be. She decently renders her thanks
Though I lack the aplomb
To make her love me for Me Myself or for my Amedican style:
Intruder, and too fat.
She thinks I think our war's a lark and her suffering not worth while.
Still, what she's getting at
Is part of a complex problem of country and class and taste
Useless to ponder on.
'Er 'usband ugrees. We are buddies and all friendship be a waste;
Soon enough it is dawn,
Nearer the day I fare for France where wars are actually faced.

We smother our sheepish yawn,
Ole Limey and young G.I., hands-acrost-the-seas. I quit my foster-home
Shelved full of P.X. food
To bivouac nights in a circus-ground from the which I may not roam
Unless I plan it good.
Our circus-grounds are guarded by fairly reliable M.P.s
With itchy tommy-guns.
Even often courageous I've irrational fears of these
Amongst some other ones
Mainly about a French-plan tour in a rational modern war
Beyond this circus-ground:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What lurks for Third censored-dash-censored Army on foreign shore.
Joe Sentry on his round
Lets nary a whisper drop on when we ship out, or how we sail
But I'm not wholly lost.

I read in a week-old journal, th'invaluable "Daily Mail"
Snuck in here at some cost:
John Gielgud opens "Hamlet" in Manchester right this selfsame week:
Perchance this very Night!
I start to charge my batteries, low volts of the Terrible Meek.
Whether it's Wrong or Right
John Gielgud I intend to view, granted Official Permission or not.
Of course it's bad to go.
Deserters from imminent invasions all deserve to be shot
But I shall see his show,
So I trickle out of our circus-ground, nab a fast tram into Town
As quick as you'd say 'Knife'
And it IS the Opening-Night! My ticket costs me arf-a-crown,
The best night in my life
(In a theater). The house was packed. Stuffed in a balcony, sat
I, tight against a wall
But knowing the words and the music and where its plot would get at
I missed nothing at all
Of that greatest Hamlet of an era that knew Jack Barrymore.
My Father years ago
Graded me all his Hamlets; awarded grand-prix of princes for
Black Edwin Booth although
He conceded Sir Henry Irving possessed the more argent voice.
Johnston Forbes-Robertson
(At least from photographs) had, until tonight, been my personal choice.

Soon is our drama done:
Ophelia (Peggy Ashcroft) was side-swiped by a flying-bomb
Only two days before.
She goes daft with a bandaged wrist; her performance gains pow'r therefrom;
That's what Theater's FOR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gielgud beggars description. If its Begetter could only have seen
His Hamlet to the life.
Our hearts are cleft in twain; he cozens, he cradles his Mother-Queen,
Minx, sister, mistress, wife.
No sweet prince ever drew breath dowered by dynasty or demesne
Peer to his taffeta air,
His consonant hysteria, his generous insane
Cool canny candid stare
When he transfixes his schoolday chums, snapped links with a lost charmed youth,—
Rosencrantz, Guildenstern.

But now this production assumes the superfetation of truth.
In my mind's eye still burn
That sunset end, that music at the close, that final scene of all,
That feast of corses strewn:
(Enter Fortinbras & British Ambassadors . . .) We bite on breath
Bright midnight on black noon.
(Drums, colours, attendants. . . .): "This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death. . . ."

What did those English find?

An empty throne, *(stage-center)*. Loyal Horatio at post, on guard,
Nor has he lost his mind,—
Snatches the Crown from his bleeding Prince, ill-starred if starry-eyed.
He sets that hollow Crown
Upon its siege imperial. Hail! The King lives nor ever has died.
Then kneels Fortinbras down
And this piece is no longer Gielgud's nor is it Shakespeare's either
Though both made it come true.
It blazons the armour of England in every sort of weather:
Treason or buzz-bomb, too.
England shares playwright and poet with soldier, civilian and all
Allies of whom I'm one.
England, what thou wert, thou art. Bang hands. Roar throats. Teary curtain-call.
Thus all her wars are won.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fixer

Sol Factor was a fixer; it's very grateful I'm
To him, snatching from self-murder,—me,—marking penal time,
Fourteen months stoking one stove from hot to cold.
Sol Factor fixed me up, the punk,
With a flagrantly unexpected, still fragrantly recollected
Irrelevant six-foot hunk
Of Mormon gold.

One year, two months? A lifetime. Stir-crazy I've become.
I'm not lazy, Sarge; I lack a knack; nor am I playing dumb.
Nightly I bank hot coals with my furtive pat;
Hours before Sergeant's awake,
Scamper over, tamp her, fiddle her clinkers, diddle her damper,
Give her a shiver and shake.
She's out cold, flat.

"College fella? Jerk. What they teach you that there college?"
Anent this stubborn stove, naught but needless knowledge.
"You've stuck here long enough. Can't you pull a wire?
There must be some slot you can fill,—
So be like me; go and see. Why,—I'd try, I'd cry, I'd damn near die;
Sure as hell I'd not lie still
Friggin a fire."

Boing! A light goes me up,—one frantic prurient flame;
Filed among long unsavored names, one of well-favored fame:
Sol Factor, Pop's old pal from dank stagnant Lynn.
Like Dad, a lad with boundless gall,
Hutzpah (nerve); joined a ward-heeler's staff; coined his graft with cobweb craft;
In trouble? Just go see Sol.
This Factor's *in*.

In what? South Boston's Dublin Club. Canny tactics, too.
Wid all dem shanty Oirish they kin use one Yiddish Jew.
Fixed bail doublequick for his bailiwick;
Pulled the strings but spurned renown.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You want ice cut? Some crumb shut up, sprung, or fastidiously
hung?
Sol's the slickest trick in town
For kike or mick.

Time marches on. A war needs brains,—Factor's not the least;
Washington's a kosher barmecide's posh political feast.
Sol's pitched his post in Old State-Navy-and-War.
Lincoln's lank ghost, Wilson's grey shade,—
Masters of lost American wars haunt these granite corridors.
Sol's the Most. One's got it made
Once past his door.

"Whadja want?" Shark tooth, snake eye, fish flesh, skinned turtle
nose.
Undone, I blushed in caitiff heat. Maiden sweat arose.
"I heard you're here. . . . "He blenched, betrayed. "So, and
well?'
"Pop just said to look you up, though
Everyone's here now, somehow, anyhow. . . ." I know; I'd better
blow.
Snake eyes broil. Sol slurs: "We'll go
To my hotel."

At the desk he claimed his key. A servile clerk inclined.
All Pow'r corrupts; abs'lute Pow'r. . . . I'm spineless, Lord, re-
signed
When wings from Heav'n, as if God's mind was in it,
A mortal seraph, beauteous:
Burnished brass, blazing boots, snappy cap, tailored suit. He
sure shoots
The Works. Sol burps: "Excuse us
For a minute."

It's a warrant-officer,—strange rank, rare animal,—
Interstitial, above us men, below the brass, yet all
I've met incarnate their lonesome dignity.
They prize their place. What's Buster's game?
Roughhewn jaw, suave supple lips, stropped blue chin, Choctaw
tuft, belted hips
Mean Business. It's a shame
He's not for me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He's Factor's man, perquisite of egregious duty.
Sol's alarmed how hot I've got staring at blatant beauty.
Comment's called for: "A guy I help, now and then. . . ."
I'll bet. Let's us three have a drink.
"No siree,"—(sternly); "Bill has his problems. I help lick 'em, fix 'em."
Blinks his coy octipoid wink.
Jay zus. Aye, men.

Upstairs, at least real whiskey. I'm starved, get fuzzy drunk.
No eats. Cheap skate. He wants me buzzed. O.K. God keep me, stunk.
Nightmare exercise, the seamier side of war.
Crut is dirt, but it tastes dirty
Or grows absurd. We utter no word. Sol flutters, a girly bird.
Time drags its ass. 10:30.
Whoring's a bore.

Twin beds turned back; Fort Belvoir,—long leagues away, by bus.
This bridal-suite's avid for the unlikely likes of us.
Sol slinks to the john; hear his weak leak and hawk.
I've missed my boat and lost my bet.
If I stay on, all else is lost. Grab the last of his liquor fast;
Save my sacred honor,—yet.
I click his lock.

And made it! Lobby abandoned. Lone night-clerk, whilst there,—
Ensconced in Morpheus' lap or an overstuffed easy chair
Lies Buster Bill snoozing, stupifiedly.
Hah! Had Sol told him to return?
"Mister. . . ." (Warrant-officers aren't ranked 'sir'; call me 'mister');
"Don't sleep here,"—since who shan't learn
To swipe what's free.

Opal panther eyes peep ope in ripe astonishment:
Me, Sol's current trade made so soon; he don't dig what it meant.
"Bill,—" (man-to-man); "How about a hot square meal?"
"You know a place?" We share the way,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Near by: The Shore Shack; straight rye, sword-fish; pecan pie
for a late dish.
His move: "You gotta place to stay?"
"With you." It's real.

Hail Joseph Smith! Praise Brigham Young! Mormons bred my
Bill;
An angel his ma, a saint his pa, winged from Cumorah Hill.
Apostles schooled their cornsprout, ruled him thus:
Gentiles shun their God-given sun;
Treasure pleasure it's due measure; the peculiar's a refresher;
Individuals: have fun
But make no fuss.

There's a Mormon hostel run for sainted service men.
The joint's shut. It's 2 a.m. Yet they let us in, so then
We shower, hit one soft sack,—where, nothing loath,
Streetlamps pour florins o'er his chest.
Quoth Kit Marlowe: "I'll tell ye how smoothe his brest was &
his bellie."[1]
"Bless Sol Factor for this nest,"
Was what we quoth.

Bless Sol at sunrise (Sunday), a few more sunny days.
War plays its pawns in a funny madcap cat's-cradle maze
Whence my Sergeant charges in: "Hot news, kid!
You're shipping out, man. You know *when?*
Pronto. Chop chop. *Overseas.* Now. Wow! Special Orders. Holy
Cow."
I didn't see Bill again.
Maybe Sol did.

[1] *Hero & Leander,* by Christopher Marlowe. 1st sestyad, line 66.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN HAINES

The Battlefield

Bright in the afternoon,
with snow in their manes
and slender horns on fire,
the caribou grow up
from a shadow in the earth.

At this fire the hunter
warms his hands,
his heart full of ravens
and wounded ghosts.

The tundra is a living
body, warm in the grassy
autumn sun, breathing
the odor of crushed
blueberries and gunsmoke.

In the tangled lakes
of its eyes a mirror of ice
is forming, where
frozen gut-piles shine
with a dull, rosy light,
and severed heads
with tongues lolling
try to bury themselves
in the stiffening moss.

And coarse, laughing men
with their women
are lugging the ropes
of bleeding meat
up the long slope of winter.

But there comes a time
when the shadow overflows

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and fills the shallow
ravines, extinguishing
one by one the tiny campfires
flaring under the wind.

There are departures and silences.

Full of blood, with a sound
like clicking hoofs,
the heavy tundra slowly
rolls over and sinks
in the darkness.

Stampede

There are cold, bearded men
laboring through the winter night;
they climb the drifts
of a windy, starlit pass
with iron sleighs, and rough dogs
whining in harness.

Behind them, ships shrouded
in smoke and steam
unload by the light of bonfires.
Mingled with heavy thuds
and the creak of straining tackle,
ghostly voices float slowly upward,
whitening in the cold night air.

Beyond the pass small boats
lie on the shore of a lake,
half-filled with snow, their thin
sails stiff with ice.
The boatmen are fast asleep,
wrapped in furs and frozen sweat,
dreaming of gold
and the white land of promise.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poem of the Forgotten

I came to this place,
a young man green and lonely,
hunting the lair
of a childhood dream.

Well quit of the world,
I framed a house of moss and timber
and sat in the warm dusk
singing to myself as a man sings
when he knows there is
no one to hear.

I made my bed under the shadow
of leaves, and awoke
in the first snow of autumn,
filled with silence.

The years have gone by
in a cluster of stars and sunlight;
my footprints have slowly filled
and the path by which I came
is grown to
a thicket of roses.

The way back is hidden.
I have almost forgotten my name.

The Waterhole

I have this strange, persistent
vision of the North:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An old man climbing a hill,
bent over a willow stick,
his wild blue eyes staring into
a long, blue twilight.

Behind him five dogs, thin
and patient under their packs.

Somewhere on the mountain
lies a waterhole; pale salmonberries
are growing beside it,
a place of darkness and rest.

Dead Horse Gulch

Nothing so beautiful as a man
and animal working together,
but without gentleness
the long toil is bitter.

They came up from the sea,
wearing a harness of galls;
those who fell were unloaded
and pitched into the ravine.

Where a sign once warned
the traveler not to drink,
a corpse rises swollen
like a terrible sigh—a man
runs besides it,
swinging an iron rod.

The souls of horses pass on
into the sun.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Snow Lions

I

Someone has died
in the next room.

I awoke and heard
in the rainy night
the sound of trumpets
and drums and
the chanting of Lamas:

A procession wound
through the darkened
corridors of
the sleeping monastery.

Someone was passing,
going out into the rain
like a ship bound into
foggy seas with horns
and a buoyant bell.

II

I fell asleep
and dreamed of the body
slowly ascending
through sunlight toward
the cold Himalayas.

And someone was trying
to tell me the
legend of the Snow Lions:

They are white and yellow
as the cold sunrise,
with manes as blue and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

purple as the shadow
of a mountain at evening.

Their voices are in
the avalanche and
the cracking of glaciers.

No one living has
ever seen them. Only
those whose lives
are hushed and holy
have eyes that see
so far and deep.

To Turn Back

The grass people bow
their heads before the wind.

How would it be
to stand among them, bending
our heads like that? . . .

Yes . . . and no . . . perhaps . . .
lifting our dusty faces
as if we were waiting for
the rain. . . ?

The grass people stand
all year, patient and obedient—

to be among them
is to have only simple
and friendly thoughts,

and not be afraid.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After the Firestorm

They are all gone, and
the red eye of the furnace
sees deep into destination—
like a breathing rose
it expands in that darkness.

Swollen with smoky blossoms
the body bursts open,
showering a hidden altar
with blood, thick wine
of a last sweetness,
to be consumed by swarms
of dark, sweating bees.

The eyelid has fallen . . .

In the drafty chute
of a black and bitter evening
the soul rises whimpering
on sooty wings.

Winter News

They say the wells
are freezing
at Northway where
the cold begins.

Oil tins bang
as evening comes on.
Clouds of steaming
breath drift
in the street.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Men come out to feed
the stiffening dogs;

the voice of the snowman
calls the white-
haired children home.

Poem for a Cold Journey

On the road of the self-
contained traveler I stood
like one to whom the great
announcements are made.

In one hand I held
a hard, dry branch with
bitter, purple fruit;
in the other hand a small,
blue and yellow bird
whose closed eyes stared inward
upon a growing darkness.

Listening, I could hear
within myself the snow
that was coming, the sound
of a loud, cold trumpet.

To Fall Asleep

Whether we fall asleep under the moon
like gypsies, with silver coins
in our pockets, or crawl deep
into a cave through which the warm,
furry bats are grinning and flying,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or put on a great black coat
and simply ride away into the darkness,

we become at last like trees who
stand within themselves, thinking.

And when we awake—if we do—
we come back bringing the images of
a lonely childhood: the hands
we held, the threads we unwound
from the shadows beneath us;
and sounds as of voices in another
room where some part of our life
was being prepared—near which we lay,
waiting for our life to begin.

The Escape

Last night I walked away
into the sunset.

I wore only a small pair
of shoes and a coat
through which the wind could blow.

My eyes were almost blind,
and yet I saw
against eternity's blue slope
a shadow like myself,
pilgrim of blood and gold.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAXINE W. KUMIN

The Pawnbroker

The symbol inside this poem is my father's feet
which, after fifty years of standing behind
the counter waiting on trade,
were tender and smooth and lay on the ironed sheet,
a study of white on white, like a dandy's shirt.
A little too precious; custom-made.
At the end of a day and all day Sunday they hurt.
Lying down, they were on his mind.

The sight of his children barefoot gave him a pain
—part anger, part wonder—as sharp as gravel
inside his lisle socks.
Polacks! he said, but meant it to mean
hod carriers, greenhorns, peasants; not ghetto Poles
once removed. *Where are your shoes? In hock?*
I grew up under the sign of those three gold balls
turning clockwise on their swivel.

Every good thing in my life was secondhand.
It smelled of having been owned before me by
a redcap porter whose ticket
ran out. I saw his time slip down like sand
in the glass that measured our breakfast eggs. At night
he overtook me in the thicket
and held me down and beat my black heart white
to make the pawnbroker's daughter pay.

On Saturday nights the lights stayed lit until ten.
There were cops outside on regular duty to let
the customers in and out.
I have said that my father's feet were graceful and clean.
They hurt when he turned the lock
on the cooks and chauffeurs and unlucky racetrack touts
and carwash attendants and laundresses and stock-
room boys and doormen in epaulets;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they hurt when he did up accounts in his head
at the bathroom sink
of the watches, cameras, typewriters, suitcases, guitars,
cheap diamond rings and thoroughbred
family silver, and matched them against the list
of hot goods from Headquarters,
meanwhile nailbrushing his knuckles and wrists
clean of the pawnticket stains of purple ink.

Firsthand I had from my father a love ingrown
tight as an oyster, and returned it
as secretly. From him firsthand
the grace of work, the sweat of it, the bone-
tired unfolding down from stress.
I was the bearer he paid up on demand
with one small pearl of selfhood. Portionless,
I am oystering still to earn it.

Not of the House of Rothschild, my father, my creditor
lay dead while they shaved his cheeks and blacked his
mustache.
My lifetime appraiser, my first prince whom death un-
horsed
lay soberly dressed and barefoot to be burned.
That night, my brothers and I forced
the cap on his bottle of twenty-year-old scotch
and drank ourselves on fire beforehand
for the sacrament of closing down the hatch,
for the sacrament of easing down the ways
my thumblicking peeler of cash on receipt of the
merchandise,
possessor of miracles left unredeemed on the shelf
after thirty days,
giver and lender, no longer in hock to himself,
ruled off the balance sheet,
a man of great personal order
and small white feet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lately, At Night

Father,
lately I find myself repairing
at night by inches the patchwork of your death.
The undertaker's elevator
slides upstairs like a sneakthief
going hand over hand up a back drainpipe
to an unused bedroom. The french doors open
and unction takes me by the elbow.
I am pulled up short
between those two big boys your sons, my brothers
brave as pirates putting into
a foreign port.

Tonight again
you who had sworn off funerals
and said you'd have us send out for champagne
lie stuffed and stitched like a suckling pig
prettied up for the fiesta.
Even from the doorway your profile
sticks up against air and velvet like a cutaway
springing erect in a child's popout book.
The jut of your nose is a thumb forced backwards.
Your eyes, those crafty Indians,
are three-quarters closed, but the twig
you wait for doesn't snap
and the old odd cleft of your chin
is faintly blue under a brand new shave.

We whisper over you, doing business:
the middle priced blanket of flowers,
a car to call for the reverend,
organ music to muffle the heels of all comers,
and for our mother's dizziness
two ushers to superintend.
But where are the belly dancers,
the cake that breaks open,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the whiskey and rattlers and three-corner party hats
and in this extravaganza
where is the gently tipsy old lady
who comes on at a foxtrot,
whisking you under the archway and out,
as simply as that?

I will tell them
you died with three days' whiskers on your face.
I will tell them
the final blip from the wires
daringly threaded into your heart
to keep the pace
announced itself on the radar screen
and faded down the track,
one small plane easing itself over the horizon,
and not the gas mask full of oxygen
and not the long shots of adrenalin
and nothing lusty left could haul you back.

Father,
lately at night as I watch your chest
to help it to breathe in
and swear it moves, and swear I hear the air
rising and falling,
even in the dream it is my own fat lungs
feeding themselves, greedy as ever.
Smother, drown or burn, Father,
Father, no more false moves, I beg you.
Back out of my nights, my dear dead undergroundling.
It is time. Let the pirates berth their ships,
broach casks, unload the hold, and let
the dead skin of your forehead
be a cold coin under my lips.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mother Rosarine

Next-door Mother Rosarine
of the square white front and black buckram
tugged up the morning with cinches of keys,
rode through The Mass, a bristle-chinned queen,
jingling the tongues that unlocked the linens,
the larder, the gym suits that luffed at the knees
of the boarders, and swung on the door to His Kingdom

through which I did not dare pass.
I came in screw curls and dotted swisses,
came through the hedge to that swaddled lap.
Cheeks on her starch, a traitor to my class,
I nibbled Christ's toes on the rosewood cross
and begged her, Mother, take off your cap.
O I filled up my vestal with baby kisses.

Wrong, born wrong for the convent games
I hunched on the sidelines, beggar fashion.
My child, said Mother Rosarine,
rooting for your side is a useful passion;
she led three cheers and a locomotive for the team.
Beet-red Sister Mary Claire, a victim
of rashes, refereed. She called for time.

At vespers, hot in my body still,
I stole back in up the convent stairs
and sat alone with the varnished smell
of the scribbled desks, and dreamed of angels.
There were lids to pry in that chalkdust air.
A rosary strung with lacquer-black kernels
slid in my pocket. It polished my fingers.

The seeds grew wet in my palm. Going down,
clicking the blessings I made my own
and testing the treads for creaks, I could hear
Mother Rosarine's voice turn the churn downstairs.
In the buttery sunset, in the beadroll mansion
her nuns, like rows of cows in their stanchions
softly mooing, were making the sound of prayer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This Praying Fool

A prayer for a bad time
ought, pro forma,
to have God in it—
a name, an apostrophe, Someone
for *hasten the day*
or *deliver me.*

Lord, Lord
for the children
who turn in a little boat in bed,
all-night sailors,
while Mother and Father
bob in the next room
already at anchor
in the only harbor.

For outpost pickets
spaced in old-fashioned foxholes
who balance their terrors
like peas on an oily knife,
a watchful *Almighty*
to roll the barbed wire.

There also in rooms
where the dying
helplessly strangle, slow motion,
a handhold on angels
to push their lungs under and out.

And for those women
miscarrying in railroad stations
who tear at the wooden seats
of the toilets, *Jesus,*
to come away unnoticed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Father,
when my ghosts come
visiting on their own terms,
calling down chimneys of the mind,
what can I answer?

Dear absent God, receive
this praying fool I am
whose lips, whose thumbs cannot
get past the middle bead
in the middle slot.

DILYS LAING

Emanation

The poet sweats to build himself a ghost
of words to haunt the world with, lest he be lost
out of the mind of men with his own dust.

Death shall disperse the words, but not so soon,
he hopes, as earth may close about the bone,
or the fierce worm upon his flesh may dine.

He is in love with the mind. There he would fall:
a seed to leaf beyond his funeral;
a bell-note circling broader than the bell.

Stay, my ghost, and claim a slender space
amongst these others. Sleep, my dust, in peace,
if my words breathe an hour above the grass.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Checkmate

I live with my animal
my savage mirror mate.
Hairy sebaceous and eructive—
still it is warmer than death.

I house with my animal
which, gourmandizing
self relieving and lusting
pricks my pomposities
and makes a plain journey.

I boast to my animal
that I have loftier aims.
It jeers at me from the glass, agrees
that death is trustworthy
as a destination.

The Print of Man

Somebody flicked a switch. The trees are lit with green.
Fractions of angels pipe their glee in the branches.
The birds are not concerned with the human condition,
are tongues in Paradise, absolved from our complex pain.

If a bird's life is little, his minute is long, is forever.
No mirror hangs in his head facing a pair of ways
to show him last week's sin, next Tuesday's duty.
Sing, small bodied voice. Your song is all there is of time.

I come to a cave in a mountain and find the relics of angels:
bones of their wings and a shroud that bears the print of man.
I leave the cave, stare down at the cruel cities,
and weeping turn from them to hear the clean birds chanting
praise.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If it is true that creation is mindless then mindlessness is a better designer than mind. It may be that the thoughts of creation are very very long and slow, so long and slow that we can't see that they are there at all.

How the skeleton of a little bat, doll parasol
polished and jointed, wired behind glass in the
biology building, can pierce the eye, mind, heart,
swing wide a window of revelation, of love toward
what we pause before calling God but hope is a
beneficent spirit and believe is a patient maker

and doll parasol is too trivial for this clean core
of onetime flesh, fur and blood, for this central
rectitude of ambient fear and hunger.

The Fall

All in a wind the world goes
the wood duck rise and fly
the leaves stream in a storm
and the stars storm by
all in a wind all in a wind

Tomorrow comes too soon, too soon
the mallard cry and go
the northwind sends all summer south
and the worlds fall and flow
all in a wind all in a wind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOROTHY ROBERTS

Movement

Now in the first faint light, our room unlit,
The first sounds of the birds are scarcely shaped,
But from the quiet trees a note, a note
Comes at the touch of light in dark boughs draped.

Lifted on silence still the notes increase
Each to its fullness. Light has found our mirror.
Together light and song in balance grow,
Spreading and soaring till our time and error

Gradually form, worn, clamorous and worried,
Take over house and treetop, seizing sway
Over the mind extended from its waking,
And all the ancient newness draws away.

Three Girls

The woods suggested it, the forest of urges,
And we undressed and walked among the leaves
To let the skin release its impulses
In little starts and pleasures lighter than real.

Leaves, fronds, stones, mosses, brooks, tendrils and
flowers,
I thank you for the delicacy of those hours
Letting the impulse out, the shower in
Of cool quick contact and the bars of sunlight.

Into the forest vanishing for persuasion
We found the dusky place and golden haven
Fern wand and cedar bough gradually gave—
Still is all lover's touch partly of leaves.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARVIN COHEN

My Friend

(Selected Episodes from Novel, "The Self-Devoted Friend")

SENSITIVE MUSIC, nature in a pose of culture, intellectually literary books, and enduring works of classical art, are admired with universal passion by my highly developed friend. He has a refinement worthy of man's position among the superior animals. Even when he thinks subjectively, the thoughts are polished by sophistication. At home equally in a library or museum, and certainly no stranger to a concert hall, my friend is raised neatly above the fish and bird, whose instincts barely subscribe to more than the required subsistence for sea or air survival. What fish has heard of Bach, and what bird can do more than just pronounce Michelangelo? Shakespeare and the glories of sunset are also well known to my friend.

And yet, to balance out my friend's all-roundedness, it is fair to mention that he goes in for the wholesome pleasure that well becomes his virile manhood. To be both not a prude and yet genuinely cultured is, in our age of specialization, a mark of a rarely whole man, which I'm certain my friend is. He's humble, too.

*

When it comes to living, my friend insists on variety. First he lives on one side, and then on the other. In the end, he comes right side up, somewhat overbalanced toward the center, but flavored with a very liberal outlook. Anything he sees is always held at memory distance, full of the wisdom of perspective. He knows that prejudice distorts. So when he sees a black man walking down the street, casting a shadow equally black in the sun's indifferent democracy, my friend whitewashes his vision with kind tolerance and regards the passerby as an albino. The Negro is flattered, and stops to thank him. Their shadows intermingle, diffusing the brotherhood of man with a glowing blur, and furthering the definition of progress. My friend is taking lessons on how to become a Negro. This is a racial change of a serious nature, but the equality is ripe for it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*

My friend enjoys standing in the sun. Once he did it early in the season and absorbed so much of its fury that the sun went into a decline and set, just before evening. But it still burned in him. Later that night he passed a young flower, which, in the power of his secondary rays, grew mature at double the usual deathly pace.

When the moon came out, it glowed brighter. Why? It had to reflect my friend's stored-up heat.

Before my friend's sunburn turns to tan, can electricity be ignited from his energy bank? Better still, what are atomic possibilities?

Spies from the other side plot to kidnap my friend, while his own country claims to militarize him. The compromise is to have a Cold War surgeon carve him neutral. This partly answers the disarmament problem.

But now it's too late. He tanned and faded. Only the power to procreate remains, an issue significant only to women who allow it to concern them.

How little do we know about the sun? Our ever-breathing vitality depends on such a remote fire. My friend was blessed with inner knowledge, and now shadows degrade the memory.

*

When there's a girl handy, my friend gets all fouled up with what goes for instinct, if such a thing can be said to exist in so animal-like a person, full of barbaric tendencies and pre-tribal inclinations like that ravishing sexpot, the amoeba, who makes love inside his own house to his friendly neighbor, himself—or itself, rather. Deep inside him, where it really counts, and only essence dwells, my friend is a complete brute. He even thinks like one.

So when a girl is handy, my friend, impelled by something wilder than instinct, something far cruder and more primitive than the need to survive, goes nuts, goes flat bottom nuts. He's no longer any man, not even a drive, and even biology refuses to be responsible, and as for chemistry, it prefers the laboratory, thank you. Only metaphysics can account for it.

He sizes up his prey, with those squinting things he uses which in real life are just seeing-dog hormones, and the drip goes out of his fangs full of purple greed and the green venom of sin, and now

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if lust never existed before—if it just walked on earth full of early innocence—it gravitates like destiny where nature places it in the supreme order of logic, dropping it dead center into theology's most abstract hell, better known as the flaming organ of my friend—who, incidentally, is just a passive observer of this surgical violation of cosmic ethics—a bystander, you might say. At this point, the girl has narrowly made her escape. She has fled, leaving my friend to hold his bulging bag full of unnecessary energy. "What should I do with this?" he asks me. I look the other way, not wishing to spoil my appetite. "Have you thought of reproduction?" I ask him—a textbook term I had once learned. "What's that?" he wondered, and I laughed to see his brain amid such stubborn flesh, like a tiny marble glittering between the bulky folds of a mammoth football tackle. But as for the task at hand, I told him what reproduction meant, and how it was indirectly responsible for the outsized population ratio, using birth as the primary vehicle. My friend was fascinated, and lapped up these facts hungrily, like a young dog straining for his graduation exercises to become a fullfledged studhorse, and taught to pant like a readymade stallion, a mare being in view, and salivating to the ding dong of that most celebrated of all bells, good old conditioned reflex, enabling anyone with enough sense to go literally to the dogs. "I love reproduction!" my friend announced, and went out in search of a partner with whom he might generously share his new scientific crime. I wished him luck, and sighed. "Dear me, what a most unusual world we live in," I said to myself, and nearly died of the surprise. Hours later, my friend came back. He had lost weight. "Have you eaten of the apple?" I asked, quoting at large from some biblical source. Of course he didn't understand, so all night we stayed up learning the Bible, which confused his sexuality no end. "I'll be a priest then," he announced, while dawn was tuning up in a little bird's throat. "You're addicted to extremes," I said. This flattered him, his vanity was so tickled that when he began laughing I knew that it would be several centuries before inertia would prevail on him, for decorum's sake, to stop. Now I hardly listen, except when a sudden urge for amusement relaxes my ear control, and then those consecutive peals of laughter, expressing sin and guilt and atonement, come rushing in like the march of the Crusaders, the stealth of missionaries, the public alarm of the evangelist, the mummified secrecy of the nun, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rigid cynicism of the movie censor, and strict prudent prohibition everywhere. A foul, wise laughter, that penetrates the normal waking nightmare and violates the purity of a peaceful Spring day, with its harsh accents of religion and violent beats from the first drum of the archaic savage beast, who toils his squat arms in a dirty low sun. A chant, mingling prayer and marriage, lends its accompaniment, an echo doomed to fulfill the human race.

*

"Can't I do *anything*," despaired my friend, "without my conscience stepping in like a congressional investigating committee?" "Why? Doesn't your conscience like women?" I asked him, moderating my smile with a tug of heartfelt sympathy. Plunging headlong into philosophy, with neither a map nor a dictionary, my friend summed up life: "It's hell," he said. "Don't jump at conclusions," I warned him, "before the egg is hatched." "I'm no farmer," he said, "that I have to worry how to feed the world with agriculture." Returning to his complaint, I brought up the conscience again. "Just how does it operate," I asked him: "by what mechanical principle?" "Let me illustrate," he said, with the patience of a Job or a Freud: "Last night, out late with a girl, it came to kissing time. I rubbed scented vaseline onto my lips, secreted paste over my teeth from an internal cleanser, filled up the pores of my tongue with distilled droplets of high-powered mint, and anti-salivated the mouth wash in a thorough gleam of transferable hygiene. Synchronizing the kiss with our clicking heart-watches until the perfect second was timed to the ripest practical fulfillment, we overstepped the boundary and fell facelong down the ancient corridor of wicked Mother Lust." "Go ahead," I yelled, feigning mild indifference. "Well, when we finished our pleasure and put away our instruments," he informed me, "Conscience arrived on the scene shouting 'Am I late, am I late?' Before I could answer, Conscience extracted the truth from the guilt-ridden air, and assigned me to this Limbo of punishment: For future, after I roll myself into my contraceptive prior to use, the girl must write legibly on the business end, 'This is wrong,' with a mascara pencil. Then, after signing it, we will feel separated by this thin document, despite our efforts to come together." "Will you break your contract?" I asked. "I wouldn't have a kid on my conscience," he replied.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*

My friend listened to music. This reduced his hearing, like a retina exposed to too many first hand observations of the sun, until memory alone was able to equip him with sound. "Comment talley vous," I shouted from the tip toe of my most sprightly lung, but his deafness by now had included French, so he answered in the universal language of a stupid frown, replete with a sound-proof structure of silence which my human words were in no way able to penetrate. Inside, a phonograph needle was twirling a record of Bach. This I detected from the way he stamped his toes in counterpoint, going in and out in rotation like a bee among his favorite flowers. (Useless to add, his shoes were transparent, and his socks were knit together at odd intervals with holes.) But when Bach had completed his abstract sermon, suddenly the noise of traffic regained its prominent perch on my friend's hearing. "How ugly," he proclaimed, "but I believe I hear your voice." It was true. My voice was beginning to assail him.

*

"I love the way things appear," admitted my friend, "the colors of a sunset, or the filled-in contour of a girl behind her dress. Or architecture that doesn't move, and soft water yielding to the power of a river. I love the display of merchandise in a window, and a tree turning four times around for the pleasure of a year. I love the hourly newspaper, and the book that shall never stop being read. I love the visual pre-taste of food prepared, and the empty wall of my bedroom while sleep is patient in the waiting dark. I love the memory of a dream that has just vanished, when the morning returns. I love the plain habits in sight, that simplify the sun and restore peace to the eye." "That's very nice," I replied, thinking about what he said: "but those are only appearances." "That's all I care about," he exclaimed, and closed those precious ornaments of his soul, the image-cluttered eyes, bearing all the substance he should ever know.

*

My friend tried to make a book. It was hard to write it, so he did the bookbinding first—an attractive hard cover and some empty pages blankly pregnant. The printer was getting impatient, with a squad of idle typesetters. But my friend had no inspiration;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that was the trouble. Prose to him meant perfection, and anything less, according to his ideals, was imperfection. So he never wrote. The book got published, a few thousand copies, and the critics, that polite crew, blamed the style for the failure, but said nothing of the empty content. The current philosophical system, however, praised the content, and is including some passages in an anthology, the title of which is, *The Vacuum in Modern Man; Studies of our Negative Times; by Authors Addicted to the Disease of which they Treat.* "I'm getting famous," said my friend, and before he could elaborate, a terrific yawn dislocated his jaw. "Ouch," he said, exerting his rugged realism. "There's material for your book," I warned him: "your personal experience." "Why bore the reading public?" he answered, while the sheer monotony of living drove a brutal ennui through the blank pages of his average paperback soul. My friend was so ordinary that the jaw snapped itself together again, because normality was so ingrained in its bony habit.

*

My friend was certainly not immune to death, so he died. Happening to be dead myself at the time, I was in a deeply sympathetic position, ideally, and my vantagepoint afforded, potentially, the maximum understanding. The drawback was that I couldn't utilize this advantage. Thus our friendship entered a perpetual equality, which gave every indication of remaining so for the length of its infinite duration. Justice was distributed with handsome, liberal abundance, by which we were mutually overcome, done in, depleted, castrated, undone, crucified, revenged, opened up, augmented, injured, completed, washed up, thrown away, stepped on, fouled, besmirched, violated, outraged, killed outright, murdered irrevocably, shot at, hung, pinched, choked, smothered, raped, crapped upon, done away with, shanghaied, kidnapped, unransomed, curtailed, truncated, imposed upon, de-energized, shriveled up, diminished, and rendered invisible. We were at an end, done for, and that horrid actuality passed, and has become continually true ever since, increasing as time goes by, with its regular weekly Wednesdays and other outstanding events. As deprived ex-citizens, we no longer participate in these superficial calendar festivities and decadent accumulation of annual year-by-years, but rather are immersed, or blended rather, in our full loss.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

SOME FAILURES deserve anatomizing. Not such things as Tennessee Williams's revised *Milk Train,* which actually managed to be worse than the unrevised version, no mean feat. But what of *Arturo Ui*? Brecht and Broadway simply were not made for each other. *Mother Courage* failed rapidly last season; this season, *Ui* lasted less than a week. It is a dated play, nowhere near so good as *Courage,* but the fault is still much more Broadway's than Brecht's: the same forces that whittled down the title from *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* to just plain *Arturo Ui* are responsible for the play's irresistible fall.

Brecht wrote this work in 1941 in exile in Finland. The Nazis were at the height of their power: neutral countries might be impressed by the Nazi successes and still ignorant of the extent of Nazi bestiality. At such a time there was every reason to write a play that transposes Germany to the ganglands of Chicago, and turns Hitler and his cohorts into an Al Capone and his henchmen who control an absurd but sinister Cauliflower Trust and gradually exterminate or expropriate the supposedly honest world around them. As Brecht put it in his notes to the play, it is to be performed "in the grand style . . . but pure travesty must, of course, be avoided; even in the midst of the grotesque, the atmosphere of gruesomeness must not give way for a minute." In the recent, and very bad, film, *The Condemned of Altona,* we see one brief, brilliant sequence from *Arturo Ui* as performed by Brecht's Berliner Ensemble. It is grotesque and it is gruesome, and it works. The Broadway production, a house divided against Brecht as well as against itself, collapsed miserably.

Almost all the blame must rest with adapter George Tabori and director Tony Richardson. What they turned out was olla podrida mixed with bouillabaisse and tutti-frutti. First of all, they plagiarized from Chaplin's *The Great Dictator,* and gave the whole show a circusy, burlesque tone which was ridiculous without being frightening. Here were Chaplin's sagging costumes, hypertrophic shoes, tomfoolery with pistols, cowerings under tables, and so on, but quite without Chaplin's genius. The next layer imposed on the play was Damon Runyonish Brooklynese farce. Brecht's Ui was born in the Bronx, but to Brecht this merely meant poverty and grubbiness. Tabori and Richardson superimpose a guys-and-dolls atmosphere of homey jocularity which proceeds to clash both with the Chaplinesque and the Brechtian. A further layer is manifest in some of the sets, costumes, and make-up. Here designer Rouben Ter-Arutunian echoes what he did some years ago for the Brecht-Weill *Seven Deadly Sins:* a satire in the manner of George Grosz on Berlin in the porcine Thirties; indeed, in the last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scene, the Cauliflower boys emerge in full-fledged Nazi uniforms, further muddling the tone of the play.

But it is Tabori's adaptation that adds still another stratum, possibly the worst: unfunny pastiche. Brecht has written some of the play in blank verse, some in rhyming couplets with various mock-heroic allusions to Shakespeare and Goethe's *Faust*. Tabori, an unwitty would-be wit, seized upon this to write into the text not only some of the ghastliest doggerel this side of Christmas cards, but also every kind of parody of Shakespearean and other famous lines, distorted references to music-hall songs, bathroom humor galore, anachronisms, and what have you. This vintage vandalism yields in quick succession gems like "There's something rotten in the state of Illinois," "Friends, what's in a name?" "Friends, countrymen, Brooklynites, lend me your faiths!" and a whole gallery of wreckage from *The Tempest,* like "Blue cops carousing full of airs and graces," "Have you dropped your ideas about a City Loan?—Dropped five fathoms in the earth and deeper," "She hates the smell of cauliflower now.—A very ancient, fish-like smell it is," and so on and on. When Brecht alludes to the wooing scene in *Richard III,* Tabori, nothing loath, transcribes nearly the whole scene verbatim. But when Brecht alludes to *Faust,* poor Tabori misses the point completely. Further, he tries to get every sort of easy and inappropriate laugh out of references to or paraphrases from "Barbara Fritchie," *Sturm und Drang,* John Birch, "My Melancholy Baby," "Miss Otis Regrets," and even uses out-of-place slang like "fink" or stoops to lifting a gag out of *Chips with Everything.* Other jokes run as follows: "Where are the thugs of yesteryear?" "Is this the face that launched a thousand tricks?" and "Sheet has kicked the bucket, let's all kick him while he's down!"

Add to this the fact that every scene was introduced by garish, flickering lights from an arch of lightbulbs framing the proscenium, and that Jule Styne composed some background music that may well be the most cacophonously offensive imitation jazz ever concocted. What, then, was left? A resourceful and commanding performance by Christopher Plummer as Ui—the Canadian actor's mastery of Brooklynese was in itself prodigious—but what he so magisterially embodied was Tony Richardson's totally misguided notion of the part. Also, there was some rather good scenery. Nothing, however, was left of Brecht's intention which is most trenchantly summarized in another note to the play: "Crime itself often elicits admiration. I never heard the burghers of my native town refer with anything but devout reverence and enthusiasm to a mass murderer called Kneisel, so that I have remembered his name to this day. It was not even considered necessary to invent for him those proverbial kindnesses to little old ladies; his murders were good enough."

If I dwell at such length on a pathetic fiasco, it is because it is not only pathetic but also symptomatic. What happens on Broadway? Brecht is finally understood to be in great demand. Very well: we begin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by choosing one of his least apposite plays. Next, we pick as adapter a man whose own plays have all been deserved failures and who, not content with this, has begun a thriving business of palming off his third-rate irrelevancies on the texts of writers like Brecht and Max Frisch. Then we get a hokey, gimmicky director, a typical musical-comedy composer, a bunch of hammy actors like Lionel Stander and Michael Constantine, and the original has about as much chance of survival as a virgin in a novel by the Marquis de Sade.

But the most important single fact is that everybody involved wants to achieve commercial success by explaining the obvious. Take a typical example. In a scene of *Arturo Ui,* a gangster's moll, engaged to impersonate the disconsolate widow of a slain accomplice, intones a phoney lament for herself and somebody's small child she is clutching to her bosom. "My little girl only six years old," she weeps; half a minute later it is "my little girl only five years old." The adapter wasn't satisfied with this. He had to bring in still another reference to "my poor little boy . . . er . . . girl, only five . . . er . . . six years old." Now the joke is hardly esoteric in its original form, but to reduce it to the six . . . er . . . five-year-old level is not going to improve the play for even a halfway civilized audience. Yet this is the pattern of Broadway: to translate good plays not into English but into baby-talk and baby-thought, and, ultimately, dissatisfy everyone.

In my book, *Acid Test,* I enunciated a theorem: "There is a simple law governing the dramatization of novels: if it is worth doing, it can't be done; if it can be done, it isn't worth it." Edward Albee himself had serious doubts about whether fiction can be dramatized, and, in order to find out, he undertook the adaptation of Carson McCullers's novella, *The Ballad of the Sad Café.* There is between Mrs. McCullers's and Albee's worlds a certain consanguinity: both have a view of sex that is aberrant, and a view of mankind that is abhorrent. Each in his or her way writes a kind of American Gothic, and a publicity photograph showing the two of them together gave the uninitiated viewer some pause as to who is who. But even though a novella about a town which had only three good people in it might obviously appeal to Albee, the McCullers grotesquerie and the Albee nastiness are not really sisters under the scab. A statement from the novella, "it is better to take in your mortal enemy than face the terror of living alone," might have served as epigraph for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,* but the McCullers and Albee modes are ultimately different.

Consider this exchange from *Virginia Woolf* in which the young instructor and middle-aged associate professor drunkenly discuss how the former might get ahead. Nick says he will "Take over a few courses from the older men, start some special groups for myself . . . plow a few pertinent wives . . ." "Now that's it!" George exclaims. "You can take over all the courses you want to, and get as much of the young elite together in the gymnasium as you like, but until you start plowing pertinent wives, you really aren't working. The way to a man's heart is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through his wife's belly, and don't you forget it." This is very different stuff from Mrs. McCullers's tiny Southern mill-town, where "Life could become one long dim scramble just to get the things needed to keep alive. And the confusing point is this: All useful things have a price, and are bought only with money, as that is the way the world is run. You know without having to reason about it the price of a bale of cotton, or a quart of molasses. But no value has been put on human life; it is given to us free and taken without being paid for." Note how the bleakness of this view is humanized, as it were, by the chattiness of "the confusing point is this," by the folksiness of "as that is the way the world is run"—especially by that colloquial "as." We might say that Mrs. McCullers tries to humanize the horrible, whereas Albee is bent on viewing the all too human in the most horrible light.

The Ballad of the Sad Café concerns Miss Amelia, a rich, solitary, sexually abnormal giantess, in whom meanness and the power to heal people are curiously entangled (in Albee's version, by the way, the healing is, significantly, slurred over). There is also Marvin Macy, a ne'er-do-well who completely reforms in order to marry her, is then physically rejected and financially bled dry by his wife, until he runs off to a life of crime and, eventually, the penitentiary. And there is Cousin Lymon, a shiftless dwarf with whom the giantess falls in doting love, and who becomes her tyrannical parasite. When the husband returns from jail to wreak vengeance on Miss Amelia, the dwarf whom he despises and insults falls abjectly in love with him. With Cousin Lymon's help, Marvin Macy beats up Miss Amelia and wrecks her prosperous café. The wreckers leave town together, and Miss Amelia lets her thriving business lapse and turns into a wretched recluse.

Now, in the novella, these characters and their story are sick; but the sickness is redeemed by the author's amiableness and style, and also by the fact that, not having to see the characters, we are free to palliate them in our imagination. The stage, on the other hand, forces us to see and hear the full ugliness, and Albee's additions, few and poor though they are, operate further in the direction of enforced tangibility. Moreover, Albee's antipathies, e.g., women, superadded to those of Carson McCullers, e.g., men, leave no stone unturned for whatever might crawl out from under it.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that the novella contains very little dialogue. Albee resorts, first of all, to a narrator, but there is something blatantly untheatrical and disconcerting about this nonexistent character shuffling around the place, sticking his nose into everything, sitting around like an eternal *terzo incommodo,* and talking a literary language that clashes violently with the lingo of all the others. And what a lingo! Where Mrs. McCullers had her folk talking perfectly acceptable English, Albee invents a kind of pseudo-hillbilly baby-talk full of "I were saying" and "he be going," double negatives and "ain't"s.

But the negatives at least are only double; everything else is multiple.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To pad his play, Albee takes the most banal statements like "Good evening!" or "Where be she?" and repeats and repeats them—"Who is Marvin Macy?" actually manages to get asked eight times by Cousin Lymon, if I did not lose count—till much of the dialogue sounds like a da Ponte libretto without the Mozart music, translated into dude-Ozarkian. There is, moreover, an occasional lapse into jarring city slang, as when Marvin Macy is said to be "up-ending girls from here to Cheehaw," whereas in the book he "degraded and shamed" them. In short, the play is a vast emptiness in which a lot of measly dialogue and a few miserable actions cheerlessly rattle around.

To increase the greyness, two of the three principals are inadequate. Lou Antonio as Marvin Macy callowly combines the sidewalks of New York with the dead ends of Method-acting, but Colleen Dewhurst's Miss Amelia is a more complicated failure. Miss Dewhurst is supposed to play a large, weird, uncharming woman. But there is about her, in part after part, such an absence of charm, grace, loveliness, femininity —call it what you will—that one eventually cannot divorce what may be the oafishness appropriate to a role from her very own ungainliness and uncouthness. As Miss Amelia, she does everything right, but she does it without being in the least winning. There is some basic attraction, fascination, or grace that a player must have, no matter how disgraceful or dilapidated the character to be portrayed. Miss Dewhurst, alas, repels. Michael Dunn, though, is just right as the dwarf, achieving the proper blend of distastefulness and pathos, mischief and magnetism, to recreate some of that iridescent atmosphere between drollery and evil that the book possesses and the play fundamentally lacks. Yet another adaptation of a piece of fiction has proved bad theatre.

Marathon '33 is an alleged dramatization of a chapter of June Havoc's autobiography, and deals with her finding herself out of work upon the demise of vaudeville and getting sucked into a dance marathon and all the mad, foul, ugly, pitiful goings on in that bizarre manifestation of unsaintly Vitus dance. This medieval madness transplanted to the Thirties would surely be a fit subject for the social historian, probably for the novelist, maybe even for the playwright with skill, imagination, and a point of view. Miss Havoc, unfortunately, has none of these.

What we get is a documentary that keeps stumbling over messily scattered lumps of plot, or, rather, a trite and sentimental story always at least half submerged in waves of documentation. The enormous cast of this second Actors' Studio Theatre production clutters up things on stage and off, impersonating contestants, musicians, managers, marathon spectators, gangsters who horn in on the trade; but no head emerges sufficiently above the billows of swaying and preying humanity to hold our interest, much less our sympathy. Miss Havoc's writing is either fairly accurate reportage (though not free from anachronism: mid-western low-life characters of the Thirties would have spoken of "fairies" or "queers" but not of "faggots"; and some of the dances and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

costumes were not of the right vintage), or, when not reportage, tripe. Furthermore, Miss Havoc cannot make up what mind she has whether *Marathon '33* is to be an indictment of mass sado-masochism, or whether it isn't somehow, simply and marvelously, part of her past—that wonderful past that extends from being Dainty June of vaudeville, through burlesque and movies, to Broadway, including a season of Connecticut Shakespeare and initiation into the mysteries of the Studio. Accordingly, convincing moments of horribly feelingless inhumanity are followed by horribly feelingful platitudes, at times becoming glowingly poetic like a department store before Christmas, as when the play ends on June's coming lyrically of age with the line, "You can cover the sun with a penny!"

Marathon '33 began as an Actors'-Studio exercise or improvisation and, clearly, proliferated in all directions by means of wayward accretions from everyone. It has been staged by at least four people, and was obviously intended to give as many Studio members as possible a chance to twiddle more than their thumbs. As such, it has the look of a cross between party games and a community project, and hardly at all of drama. Though certain roles are ably played (notably by Doris Roberts, Lee Allen, and Lonny Chapman), Julie Harris, as June, merely continues her career as Broadway's own Peter Pan. She sounds like an infant Demosthenes learning the art of oratory by stuffing his mouth with candy pebbles; she moves as though wearing for the first time Big Sister's high heels; she throws her extremities around like dejected members of the wedding of art and adolescence. Without doubt, Miss Harris is our theatre's oldest child actress, a prodigy of infantilism.

Off-Broadway's most honored showcase, Circle in the Square, put on Euripides's *The Trojan Women* as staged by Michael Cacoyannis, the Greek film director, some of whose films have been extremely interesting and some thoroughly overrated. Euripides's play, though to my mind one of the finest of all Greek tragedies, presents, like Greek tragedy as a whole, an almost insuperable problem for the contemporary theatre. We have seen, for instance, the attempts in Greece today to recreate these plays in the most austere, starkly archaic, grand manner; the result, for a twentieth-century theatregoer, was stupefying boredom: in our theatre, the superhuman imperceptibly bleeds into the infrahuman. We have also seen drastic efforts at cutting and modernization, such as Cocteau's bird's-eye views of *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex* (Brecht, too, tried his hand at the former), but simplification of great poetry must inevitably strike us as oversimplification. Neither method works.

Cacoyannis has aimed at something like an amalgam of the two modes: stylization, but modernistic stylization. Thus the main characters must move as in a controlled, intellectualized *grand guignol* verging on ballet, while the chorus disports itself in a modification of Swedish movements, sometimes even applying Swedish massage, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more often in a ritual re-enactment of a football game. Now it is the team going into a huddle, now the crowd roaring in a frenzy of *unanimisme,* now the bands between halves spelling out the names of their colleges. Then, again, it is the cheer leaders at work, and, at times, even a bit of tearing down the losers' goal post—always, of course, heightened in artfulness by tricky lighting. Up and down a set of stairs or slithering, intertwining, crawling across the flat of the stage, the nine women of the chorus assume every grouping that geometry—within the limits of its poor, old three dimensions—can be made to cough up. Since the play is performed in the three-quarters round, the possible permutations of constellations are abundant, and if this and balletified calisthenics did a tragedy make, we might have been deeply moved.

Instead, the evening was studied, arch, and, above all, unmoving. That this shattering play in which injustice and suffering are orchestrated with uncanny skill from the melancholy to the unbearable, from subtle, individual pain to great concerted agonies, until at last we don't know which hurt is more staggering—indeed, the play can be conceived as a contest in which each character and the chorus compete in adducing profounder wretchedness: a striving, as it were, to excel in abjection—that this play should come out as a cold piece of theory seems inconceivable. But there it is: a study in stylized, gyrating shadowboxing with the abstraction of war, with the mere concepts of slavery, enforced concubinage, and death—the sheer ghost of grief.

Among the performers, only the lovely Carrie Nye is up to her arduous assignment: she makes Cassandra into a trinity of fragile virgin, pathetic madwoman, and inspired prophetess of vengeance. There is both delicacy and asperity in this rendition, and, watching it, we are filled with the requisite pity and awe. As Andromache, Joyce Ebert, too, has some authentic moments. The others are, at best, pallid, and, at worst, like Jane White's Helen, a bad joke, or, like Mildred Dunnock's Hecuba, a desiccated schoolmistress suffering from delusions of persecution by pupils and fellow-teachers alike—and what's that to us that we should weep for her? Jean Prodromides, however, has composed a score that captures all that acting and direction fail to. It sounds like percussion and brutalized strings of a barbaric, faintly Oriental sort, vitalized by amplifying electronics: at once ancient and modern, it emerges superbly timeless.

One wishes that somebody would try producing a play like *The Trojan Women* (in a less pedestrian translation than Edith Hamilton's, by the way) in a manner as naturalistic as possible without tampering with the text. In that case, the principals and the chorus would be men and women behaving like human beings. Some of the grandeur would be sacrificed, but a modern audience would at long last be able to believe in what is happening. We have learned to take some necessary liberties with Shakespeare—who, after all, is not a naturalistic playwright, either; with the Greek classics, too, it is time to respect nothing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but the integrity of the text and proceed to rid ourselves of all conventions or approximations of conventions. Otherwise, we might just as well bring back the masks, megaphones, cothurnuses, and do the plays in Greek. Following the performance, the shrieks of delight from the assembled academicians would provide a suitable satyr play.

If the New York reviewers were overeager to make their obeisances to a Greek classic, they were no less obsequious in their bows to what struck them as a contemporary classic, Enid Bagnold's *The Chinese Prime Minister*. In this play, the seventy-year-old Miss Bagnold writes about a famous actress who, retiring at seventy, is ready, not so much for death, as for discovering and savoring what is best in life. A greatly successful businessman-husband returns from Africa to claim her love again after thirty years of separation; two sons, in and out of marriage with their odd-ball wives, claim her ministrations; a doddering but philosophic butler spouting semi-shrewd and semi-mystical semi-epigrams claims her speculative attention; among all these she hovers —vaguely interested yet profoundly self-absorbed—charming, aloof, and young in her old age. The atmosphere is a mixture of aristocratically bloodless British hedonism and ceremonial bitchiness: when a favorite retainer has just died in the chair next to one, one merely puts a screen around his crumpled form and goes on with the tart, parlor metaphysicizing. In the end, while all others are left to sort out their problems as best they can, the heroine recedes into what is to be taken as a state of enlightened, faintly religious solipsism, meditating on what it is that makes grey parrots speak whereas green ones do not (I may have got my colors reversed, psittacologists kindly forbear!), and why seals just out of the sea take so readily to the circus.

This crude summary is, of course, quite unfair to the play because it makes it sound much more bearable than it actually is. Although the work strongly resembles Miss Bagnold's earlier play, *The Chalk Garden,* in its themes and characters, *The Chinese Prime Minister* has neither the energy nor the wit of the earlier piece, and even the genteel eeriness has worn a good deal thinner. Here are a few samples. Elegant hyperbole: "I'd have liked to see her being born, exquisitely thanking the doctor." Epigram: "I hate disapproval more than anything. . . . The dearest thing in the world to me is my vanity." Aphorism: "You were meant to be a single woman, for that is how you were born." Repartee: "In a way, you hardly have a father.—Biologically difficult.—Psychologically easy." Philosophy: "I want to be attentive to trivial things." Theology: "In two minutes, God can be understood."

Obviously, a pair of miraculous resuscitations of the dead, the nicely disinfected, nondenominational godhead and undemanding deism, the extolling of the joys of old age (something Miss Bagnold has done already years ago in her vastly overpraised novel, *The Loved and Envied*), the crotchety vacuousness masquerading as an eccentric serenity, all contribute to the work's popularity with superficial profundity-seekers, mistakers of literariness for literature, searchers after

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such instant metaphysical comfort as a two-minute God—in short, the old, the frightened, the confused, and, for all I know, the lame, the halt, and the blind.

No blindness, however, should go so far as the widespread benightedness which hailed Margaret Leighton's performance as a masterpiece. It is, in fact, unbelievably artificial and inept for an actress of justified repute. Only in high-school productions have I previously met this conception of old age: pasty white make-up, the jerky movements of a marionette whose puppeteer is losing his fingers from frostbite, and a slightly adenoidal tint in the voice. It is a shocking piece of non-acting: the British counterpart of the worst kind of home-grown Method mugging. Alan Webb as the butler and John Williams as the husband are entirely adequate; the others are all variously miscast or incompetent, especially Douglas Watson and Peter Donat as the sons and Joanna Pettet as an errant wife. And Joseph Anthony's direction merely emphasizes the clumsinesses of the play: I cannot recall ever seeing so many uneasy characters facing simultaneously so many different walls, so that the principals can be grandly operatic at stage center.

If there were not so much to cover, I would gladly expatiate on a few extremely agreeable or moving off-Broadway offerings. There is the delectable little musical, *The Streets of New York,* which in a just slightly more affluent production could have created the splash it deserves to make. Its writer, Barry Alan Grael, and composer, Richard B. Chodosh, seem to me possessed of a roguish charm considerably better than mere talent. Unfortunately, neither the limitations of the production, nor those of the cast (including two thoroughly dispensable misleading ladies) permit a full disclosure of the material, though Mr. Grael does rather nicely in the comic lead. Another equally encouraging theatrical event is *Telemachus Clay* by Lewis John Carlino, one half of whose *Cages* was not without interest. This old-fashioned radio play, flawlessly acted, directed, and lighted, calls itself somewhat pretentiously a "collage for voices"—but it is, except for a beginning which is indeed a collage of Dylan Thomas, Joyce, and Sherwood Anderson, and an ending which is vague and arbitrary, one hell of a good middle. Mr. Carlino has that so-called ear for dialogue which is really not an ear at all but a generous heart that passionately yet precisely records the preposterousness, piteousness, and gallantry of the human menagerie in their interconnecting cages. *Telemachus Clay,* imperfect as it is, is still a necessary experience for any honest theatregoer.

No less satisfying an evening is provided by *In White America,* a documentary of the Negro's trek through the jungle of white American injustice (and occasional decency), from his arrival here to this very day which is, if not a day, at least a dawn. From letters, journals, journalistic accounts, trial records, and similar sources, Martin B. Duberman has assembled a piece of history that makes good theatre because it is true, interesting, and overwhelmingly important. And it is theatre

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—even if not art—in the best sense: moving, funny, humane, genuine, and, best of all, unflaggingly provocative, coming, as it does, from sources most of us would always have been unaware of, and the worse off for it. It is well staged and consummately acted by three Negro actors and, a little less expertly, three white ones. Perhaps the most touching thing was to see, at about the thirtieth performance, Claudette Nevins, a white actress, watch Gloria Foster, her Negro colleague, act out the part of a fifteen-year-old Negro girl trying to go to an integrated school in Little Rock and nearly getting lynched. Miss Foster was magnificent, but no less so was the fact that there were tears in Miss Nevins's eyes. It must have been at least the sixtieth time that she was, from the sidelines, witnessing this scene, but the tears were brand new and absolutely real. I am a fairly hardened soul, and I am fully willing to admit that this manifestation had, in a sense, nothing to do with drama. But there are moments when the theatre transcends drama, and my everlasting thanks go out to them.

The Beckett-Pinter double bill at the Cherry Lane is another civilized, literate, and, in the Beckett half, not inconsiderable bit of theatre. It is hard to pinpoint what it is exactly that Beckett has been persisting after in his later fiction and drama. You might say that he has been steadily painting himself into a dramatic corner. He has been lopping off action and space around his characters, and even pumping out whatever surrounding air they might breathe. But out of that last corner Beckett's personages manage to fulfill some harrowing, furiously funny dramatic possibilities; and their author, after having painted the entire floor a vivid, shiny black, leaves, conjurer that he is, through the walls. Or might it be more accurate to say that Beckett, just when he seems up a dramatic tree, is in fact going down it: down Yggdrasill, the tree of the world, to its very roots, and is there gnawing away at the ineffable beginning, burrowing after unfathomable meanings; that the crunch-crunch that reaches us is that of a magnificent mole digging into the darkest dark for daylight, for enlightenment. All of which is to say that, minor and mysterious as it may be, Beckett's *Play* is eminently worthy, and is impeccably directed by Alan Schneider and solidly performed in a mesmerizing, macerating monotone. Pinter's *The Lover* is a British television play that makes one yearn for the B.B.C. It is a kind of Noel Coward-Sacha Guitry ultra-sophisticated marital farce, but given such ominously yet funnily Freudian overtones as to shimmer with a comically wicked sheen. It is a slight play, but it produces tingles on both spine and intellect.

Lest it be thought, however, that I have gone off-Broadway-happy, or just soft in the head, I must hasten to report that off-Broadway can still be way off. Thus Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* was well-intentioned but derivative and unconvincing, and Aldo Bruzzichelli's staging of Genet's *The Maids* was catastrophic, and the casting of Kathleen Widdoes and Eunice Anderson as two thirds of the cast, wanton sabotage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Two Broadway musicals recommend themselves by their feminine leads. *110 in the Shade* (a musicalization of *The Rainmaker*) is a dull and often tasteless enterprise, but Inga Swenson gives a performance which, rising out of a sea of musical hodgepodge, is as memorable as some great Desdemona or Juliet. Miss Swenson fairly exudes a perfume of radiance, scatters delicious femininity out of her long hair all over the stage and auditorium, and solidifies abstractions like grace and nobility into her own concrete shape. If there is a rainmaker in the play, it is she: I cannot imagine anyone watching her without tears—not of sorrow, nor even, exactly, of joy; but of a kind of tender pride in so much brave, vulnerable humanity. *The Girl Who Came to Supper* (a musicalization of *The Sleeping Prince*) is a somewhat better but still ever so wan affair suffering from tired blood—not much blood, but plenty of tiredness—yet it has in it Florence Henderson. Unlike Miss Swenson's, Miss Henderson's work is not exceptional acting; it is personality of the most endearingly frivolous, frothily ingratiating sort. Mind you, it is very able acting and singing, too; but, above all, it is irresistible charm. It is, in fact, a definition: charm, which hitherto seemed indefinable, can now be defined in two simple words: Florence Henderson.

AIME PATRI

Paris Letter

LAST TIME, to initiate our friends in the talk of the Café du Commerce, I discoursed to you about politics. Today, I should speak a little about everything: literature, poetry, philosophy, art, cinema, and what have you. But we must make our transition gradual. If French intellectuals, as a general rule, are scarcely partisans of the regime, one of the most illustrious of their number is the spiritual arm of the temporal powers. André Malraux makes conscientious use of the credit at his disposal to spruce up the monuments of Paris and the more artistic provincial cities. The Louvre radiates in part an undreamt-of whiteness. Other initiatives are pleasing to the backwaters of history. As a man of the old avant-garde, the Minister of Culture is always concerned with being at the forefront of the new. A film evoking a criminal case from between the wars—already made use of by Genet in *The Maids*—had been warmly recommended by the united big chiefs of existentialism and surrealism: Sartre, Beauvoir, Breton, etc. were in agreement that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one must go see *Les Abysses*. The Minister snapped it up for official presentation as a tribute to French greatness, even though the producer is of Greek origin. Thus were the intellectual opposition and the powers that be united for the nonce. But the public at large seemed indisposed toward this work to such degree that it rather rapidly vanished from the screens, so that your correspondent had no chance to formulate an opinion of his own.

Since I have brought it up, how do things stand with the avant-garde—old, new, and all-but-new? The recent past imposes some obituaries: Jean Cocteau disappeared at the same time as the singer Edith Piaf, and the popular press did not fail to associate them. From time immemorial, André Breton loathed the person whom he considered the representative of a false surrealism, a sort of manufacturer of fake jewelry, more truly descended from Edmond Rostand than from Lautréamont. Nevertheless, several old friends of the author of the *Surrealist Manifestoes*—notably Picasso and Aragon—have always appreciated Cocteau. I invariably thought of him as the most elegant of our *petits-maîtres,* a kind of grand *petit-maître;* in moods of extreme severity I may have compared him to Voiture, but not to Rostand, despite the unquestionable filiation of his first poems. Let us admit, to be sure, that this was not true surrealism, although sometimes it was similar enough to fool anyone. What is true surrealism? A question resembling that of Pontius Pilate. We are asked most frequently whether surrealism, a movement dating from before the first war, is dead or not.

I should like to distinguish between eternity and movement. According to the testimony of Breton himself in the first manifesto, there existed a surrealism considerably *avant la lettre*. There will, then, be surrealism considerably "after the letter." The Knights of the Round Table have scattered in all directions and some of them have been unfaithful to all their vows, have indeed wallowed in apostasy. But surrealism is still Arthur, the once and future king, as Apollinaire sang him. Right now it is mostly retrospective exhibitions; it is a small café where a few young people sit around an old master: a small sect, vaguely Trotskyite and vaguely erotico-spiritualistic. Fierce guardians of an orthodoxy of almost political complexion, these young people who have cast out Max Ernst produce scarcely anything, not even poetry, only a kind of critical essay. The moment one of them has something to say or do, he settles down elsewhere. Why does Breton remain the captive of such an institution? The answer is simple and to the master's credit: he prefers this company to that of the academicians. He will remain himself and not commit treason. Having continually before him the example of those who have proved untrue, he prefers to remain among those who have nothing to betray. This sort of involution is grandiose: the Captain, abandoned by all his crew (only one, Benjamin Péret, had remained a faithful second-in-command, but he died), replaces them with walk-ons with exchangeable heads—ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cepting, however, in all fairness, two women who are no mere supernumeraries: the poet Joyce Mansour and the painter Toyen. Let us except also the poet-novelist André Pieyre de Mandiargues, the author of *La Motocyclette,* which almost won the Prix Goncourt. Somewhat apart from the movement, and doubtless doomed to exclusion had he really obtained the award, he sometimes signs manifestoes. In this connection be it noted that Julien Gracq, who some years ago refused with dignity to accept a prize, has never officially belonged to the movement, despite his private encounters with Breton. The better part of wisdom, if one wants to remain Breton's friend, is to avoid becoming his family.

Tristan Tzara, who was one of the pioneers of Dada in Zurich, died last December. Some of his earliest antiworks like *Monsieur Antipyrine* had just been reprinted. For a long time now he had not been a dadaist, and, after some dabbling in orthodox Marxism, gave evidence at times of being a poet possessed of epic inspiration. Dada, however, has had its offshoots: the Collège de Pataphysique, still occultly alive under the sign of Jarry, and the review *Bizarre,* published by Jean-Jacques Pauvert, etc. The dadaist temper, despite frequent osmosis, cannot be mistaken for the surrealist one. The truly surrealist humor is a pretty humorless affair. That is why that charming American in Paris, Patrick Waldberg, Max Ernst's biographer, has long since been proscribed by the surrealists.

Around 1944, Jean-Paul Sartre appeared as the new dada,[1] which is to say, profiting by the pun, the latest fashion. To the question, where existentialism stands now, I could answer, if I were ill disposed, that it is like those burnt-out stars whose light continues to reach the greatest distances. But such ill-humor would make me unjust, first of all, to myself, though I never belonged to this other family. I am surely one of the rare Frenchmen to have read from cover to cover *The Critique of Dialectical Reason,* vol. 1 (others have been announced, if Existence grants them life), and to have attempted to elucidate it in *Preuves.* François Mauriac thanked me for it in *L'Express* (he was still writing for it at the time), maintaining that this freed him from the obligation of struggling through it himself. But Raymond Aron, in the course of a private conversation, reproached me for claiming to make sense of something that had none. I feel, however, that Sartre has posed a problem in this bulky tome, albeit a somewhat too personal one: reconciling his own doctrine with that of Marxism with which he keeps abreast by reading *L'Humanité.* Those who have read "Les Mots" in a recent issue of *Les Temps modernes* will once again have found Sartre at his best, speaking, this time, about himself.

The tone of existentialism is autobiographical. Our American friends with a taste for this literature will already have read the third volume of Simone de Beauvoir's reminiscences, dedicated to *The*

[1] "Dada" is French for hobby-horse. *Tr.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Power of Things. Several critics, shocked by this manner of speaking of oneself and one's friends, considered the substance of it deplorable. But the subject dictated it: a person of the second sex feeling herself grow old is not cheerful. "I've been had!" is the concluding statement. It has been thought incomplete. "Had" by whom, sovereign Existence? By oneself, perhaps, despite all the glory. But then, who is to blame? To complain of being overwhelmed by the power in question is, however, very feminine. Simone de Beauvoir's only failure is not to have convinced us by her personal example that women are men like the rest. Can one expect them to be virile all the way? I must confess that the first two volumes of Simone de Beauvoir's recollections had already filled me with a reverential stupor before such a power of sincerity, no matter what the disadvantage to one's doctrine and prestige. She was frankly admitting that the future apostles of *engagement,* herself and Sartre, had resolutely kept aloof from all politics between the wars —one of them going so far as to refuse to vote; the other, to join a union. Full of unfeigned admiration, I must nevertheless fulfill my critical obligations by begging our American friends not to go looking in the memoirs of Simone de Beauvoir for a portrait of the age. The Queen of Egocentricity speaks not for everybody—not even for every female body. Yet there are in Simone de Beauvoir's entourage persons of the second sex to whom I wish to call attention, not only because of their having lived the political experience, but also because of the merit of their literary sensibility. Thus I cite Colette Audry.

If one wants a true picture of the era seen through an authentic feminine sensibility, one should read the charming *Apprendre à vivre* by Clara Malraux, the former wife of the Minister. It is she who can rightfully say to the men and women of my generation, slightly later than her own, "Quand je parle de moi, je vous parle de vous." Even if they were not raised in a middle-class Jewish family of German origin, they will recognize themselves in this book and be sure that its sequel will not let them down. After all, when one is sufficiently aware of feminine psychology, one is not surprised if a woman who underwent two ordeals is not, in the long run, dissatisfied with her life. And one cannot help contrasting the valiant smile of the one with the bitter stoicism of the other who considers herself robbed of everything she was unable to grab. Just as policemen in cases of masculine misdeeds opine that one must *chercher la femme,* simple souls will ransack the memoirs of Clara Malraux for a man called André. They will find him, too—not exactly changed into himself[2]—facing the protagonist. Subtler readers will understand that what they must look into above all is the clear countenance of Clara. And the gaze which she fixes on everything that has surrounded her will not disappoint them.

[2] An allusion to Mallarmé's famous line about Poe, "Such as, into himself, eternity changes him." *Tr.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After autobiography, fiction. Here I am somewhat ashamed to admit that I prefer by and large to all new publications the admirable *Fantômas,* which Laffont has reissued in ten volumes. Inasmuch as I've been reading this extraordinary crime fiction in irregularly published segments from the age of ten onward, to crown my old age I have paid a call on the surviving one of the two authors. I was thus following in the glorious footsteps of Guillaume Apollinaire, who had gone to interview the author about his method of composition (between 1911 and 1914, Souvestre and Allain produced in thirty-two months thirty-two volumes of *Fantômas,* over and above their other works). The timeliness of *Fantômas* is undiminished: in 1961, during the OAS terror in Algiers and to some extent in Paris, I was rereading *Le Fiacre de minuit,* and it seemed to me I was reading the newspapers. After that, how could I talk to you of literary prizes? A woman, one day, asked me for my forecast. I told her that I didn't follow the fluctuations of the stock market and could speak only from hearsay. The question of prizes concerns economic sociology, not literature. You will tell me that there is the "nouveau roman." Statistics show that, economically speaking, it has not been very profitable, which might prejudice one in its favor. But let me say *sotto voce* that this "new novel" seems to me more interesting philosophically than aesthetically. I do not require a novel to be fraught with psychological introspection, but, rather than the power of description, I would have that of the imagination. One ought to have time to go into specific distinctions: Sarraute and Beckett are not Robbe-Grillet and Butor. Yet if one talks to me of the poetry of description, I prefer rereading the Abbé Delille whom I have always found much to my taste. On the subject of the new novel, Jean Bloch-Michel is a good deal more competent than I am, and I am pleased to call attention to his study, published by Gallimard, *Le Présent de l'indicatif.*

The new novelists, like the existentialists who were their point of departure, believe that the inner life does not exist, that whatever happens to the subject is directly reflected in the things which concern him and which regard him more than he regards them. It seems to me that they are wrong at least in the negative part of their theory. The proof of the opposite can be found, as a matter of fact, administered in the trilogy of fantastic novels by Pierre Klossowski—*Roberte ce Soir, La Révocation de l'Edit de Nantes* and *Le Souffleur*—soon to be reprinted. In the work of Klossowski, an imaginative mind of extraordinary subtlety combining eroticism with theology, "the infusion of dreams into waking life" (according to Nerval's formula) is such that one ends up not knowing which is which, precisely the effect calculated by the author. It is no longer a question of denying the dream or of taking the imagination for a simple power of "néantisation" as formulated by Sartre. Instead of an Imaginary that lives on the rubble of a fractured Real, we have, rather, a genuinely productive imagination

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which synthesizes a Real that, left to its own devices, would have been indeed too anarchic.

Shall I speak of philosophy? There is a Sartrian or Heideggerian existentialism (my apologies to the Master of the Black Forest who has rejected this convenient label), a Hegelian Marxism, all somewhat academic, but without even—regrettably—the style of a Victor Cousin. Epigones are never amusing. For worthy souls—a trifle naive, to my mind—there are the writings of the late Reverend Father Teilhard du Chardin, a biologist like Hoeckel and Vogt, and a homilist like Mngr. Dupanloup, which makes for a novel synthesis. A rung or so lower, there is *Planète,* a publication fairly given over to mystification, brought out by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, who have successfully married off scientism to an esotericism of a slightly fortune-tellerish sort.

The phenomenologico-existentialist-Hegelo-Marxist mode, aside from the somewhat simple novelties I have just cited, has not wholly carried the day. There remain in France some good minds capable of thinking in a personal fashion and of expressing themselves not as if translated from the German. I shall mention Raymond Ruyer, a biological philosopher who teaches in the Department of Letters of the University of Nancy and expounds an original "neo-finalism," and also Stéphane Lupasco, a sort of poet-logician to whom no artistic or scientific discipline is alien. I cite them jointly because the former has criticized the latter a trifle unjustly, which does not stop me from being equally interested in both.

And what of poetry? I note, a bit abashed, that it plays a somewhat less important role in most French periodicals than it does in *The Hudson Review.* This holds true even of the *N.R.F.,* rejuvenated into the *N.N.R.F.,* and of the very ancient *Mercure de France.* We no longer have a major poetry journal such as *Fontaine,* which, at war's end, was appearing in Algiers; although it is true that, in Marseilles, the *Cahiers du Sud,* which just celebrated its fiftieth year, continues to set aside considerable space for new and old poetry. I believe that *La Tour de feu,* the gallant review of Pierre Boujut, at Jarnac in Charente, still comes out at irregular intervals. Lastly, I have received an enchanting magazine of young poets, *Ailleurs* (23, rue Froidevaux, Paris, 14e), where the surrealist influence, but in its broadest sense, is manifest. One would have to be able to speak of all this at greater length.

But in this letter I can give only indications of my disposition, good or bad, without pretense to objectivity. Let it be understood: I am not so foolish, after all, as not to allow for interests and tastes other than my own. On the other hand, in spite of best intentions, I was unable to cover everything. If you have not found my company too tiresome, it will permit me to write you another time about all the rest.

[*Translated by John Simon*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

IN AN INTERESTING ARTICLE in *Listen* Nathaniel C. Merrill, who staged the Metropolitan's new *Aida,* discussed the special problems which an opera, and particularly an opera like *Aida,* presents to a director and a designer—in the fact, for example, that "for reasons of acoustics and musical co-ordination performers cannot sing facing away from the general direction of the conductor for extended periods of time," and the fact, above all, that the action at every point must fit within the time that is rigidly predetermined by the music. Thus Robert O'Hearn had to create for the opening scene a set which not only would look pictorially effective but would enable the large group entering with the King to get on the stage in the 26 seconds provided by the 12 measures of music and to get off the stage in the 19 seconds provided by the 7 measures of music. The conferences of Merrill and O'Hearn produced their new solutions of such problems; and in addition the production embodied new ideas to make the action clearer at certain points. And the results of all this careful thought and planning that one saw on the stage were mostly good—with occasional exceptions that were surprising after such thought and planning. I have in mind not only the exception to O'Hearn's Egyptian-style sets that was provided by Amneris' apartment in interior-decorated-Park-Avenue style, but the set for the trial scene of Act 4, an assemblage of stairways which included one that rose from the depths of the building, rear center, in a curve up to the door of the trial chamber, rear left—all this providing no level space, so that Amneris' interview with Rhadames and the subsequent dramatic action had to take place, awkwardly, on the stairs. Moreover, at the rise of the curtain Merrill introduced a bit of action not mentioned in the stage directions in the score: Aida gliding furtively down the central stairway into the depths containing the tomb where the condemned Rhadames would find her in the final scene—which made sense; but it struck one as strange, later, that some of the priests arriving for Rhadames' trial should be coming up out of those depths, and that after the trial all the priests including Ramfis should descend into those depths. And *Aida* is one of the operas with built-in difficulties which no amount of thought can prevent from troubling the eye and mind of today—the difficulty, for example, of the rendezvous of Aida and Rhadames outside the temple containing Amneris and Ramfis, which was not helped much by Merrill's idea of having Rhadames first enter the temple with Amneris and Ramfis and then slip out to meet Aida; or the difficulty of the dances and triumphal ballet, with which Katherine Dunham was as unsuccessful as her predecessors. And perhaps the best solution is to make no attempt at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

verisimilitude for the eye of today, but instead to present the work frankly as a period piece, as Merrill said Franco Zeffirelli did recently at La Scala, with settings, costumes and theatrical conventions of the 1870's, including even dancing in tutus and toe shoes. But with the few exceptions noted the Metropolitan's production was effectively designed and staged; and the performance I attended, effectively conducted by Solti, had several first-rate principals: Birgit Nilsson, somewhat huge in the title role, but with a secure voice which had the power it needed in the big ensembles and the delicacy and suppleness that produced the sensitively inflected phrases of *"O patria mia";* Carlo Bergonzi, not a very imposing image of Rhadames, but with a beautiful lyric tenor which he used with unfailing musical taste; Rita Gorr, a better Amneris with her voluminous contralto voice than with her excessive gesticulation. The others ranged from Bonaldo Giaiotti and John Macurdy, who sang Ramfis and the King acceptably, to Mario Sereni, a rough-voiced Amonasro.

La Traviata is another opera with built-in difficulties, to which Kirk Browning, who staged it for the New York City Opera, and Gordon Micunis, who designed the new production, added newly thought-out strokes of ineptitude and absurdity. What dramatic purpose led them to transfer the second act from the room in the house specified in the score to the garden, didn't make itself evident; instead one saw details of text and action whose sense required the room—notably Violetta's exit—deprived of this sense by occurring in the garden. And in the first and third acts—in place of the elegance of parties attended by men of title and high society—one saw crudeness of every kind, from the hideously colored costumes of the women to goings-on exemplified by a woman's sitting, glass in hand, with her feet up on the table, and a man's removing one of her slippers (in the third act a gypsy went about reading palm after palm of hands that were gloved). Nor was all this made bearable by a distinguished musical performance.

Two men of previously demonstrated skill, the director William Ball and the designer Robert Fletcher, devised a new *Don Giovanni* for the New York City Opera that was effective much of the time but included a few new details which were in varying degree damaging. Why Don Giovanni was put into a Directoire-style costume while Don Ottavio was left in the usual mid-18th-century costume never became clear; and it deprived Don Giovanni of the sword with which to hold off the crowd at the end of Act 1. Then there was the business of Don Giovanni making love to a succession of peasant girls in the background, which distracted the attention that should have been given entirely to the singing of Zerlina and Masetto in the foreground. But most consequential and damaging was the statue's being rolled into Don Giovanni's dining room on its pedestal, instead of its stamping in as text and music require. In addition there was the damage of the English words—their wrong sound and awkwardness in conjunction with the music, their lack of distinction in contrast with the music's elegance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The performance was paced well by Rudel, and benefited by the singing and acting of Norman Treigle in the title role and the excellent Zerlina of Joan Summers-Lader.

As for *Gentlemen, Be Seated,* which converted incidents of the Civil War into a series of humorous sketches in the context of a minstrel show, it was a particularly monstrous example of what one may be led to by the erroneous idea of American opera developing out of popular American musical theater forms. And in producing it Rudel showed himself to be as deficient in sense of fitness and good taste as Jerome Moross and Edward Eager who wrote it.

I found myself disagreeing with what I had read about the Obratsov Puppet Theater—that the performances represented a keen eye for the absurdities of musicians' behavior, and that it was their accurate perception that made them so amusing. Actually there is nothing funny about the powerful voice of a gypsy singer or the shimmying of a gypsy dancer; but the grotesque caricature of the voice issuing from a puppet which was a grotesque caricature of the singer, or the exaggeration of the shimmying by a caricature of the dancer—that was what was funny. Nor is the coloratura singer embodied in Teresa Berganza or Joan Sutherland amusing; but the caricature of coloratura singing issuing from a puppet caricature of the singer was very amusing. And in addition there was one's delight over the amazing achievements of the manipulative skill of the puppeteers.

After the mediocre woodwinds and the horns sounding like saxophones in the Moscow State Symphony a few years ago, it was interesting to hear the first-class woodwinds and the horns with steady, round tone in the Moscow Chamber Orchestra conducted by Barshai. The group's opening performance of Mozart's Symphony K.201—mostly in fine-spun whispers—may have been intended to exhibit its remarkable precision and refinement of execution and tone; certainly it didn't provide what is regarded here as a correct statement of this work. And it was amusing to see the players who had stood like statues in this performance of the Mozart sway from side to side like human beings in the robust performance of Bartók's Divertimento in F at the end. In between there were performances of Bach's D-minor Concerto and Prokofiev's Sonata Op. 56 for two violins, with David Oistrakh playing second to his son Igor—a mistake, since Igor produced a tone which in the higher-ranging first parts was less beautiful than his father's would have been. And though he is an excellent player, a few solo measures in the Bartók piece enabled the orchestra's concertmaster to show that he was a much better one—with a bigger, more beautiful tone and more energy and style. The Prokofiev piece proved to be small-scale and moderately engaging.

Carnegie Hall's International Festival of Visiting Orchestras provided me with my first hearing in a hall of the Pittsburgh Symphony conducted by William Steinberg. The orchestra turned out to be a fine one, which amazed me with its ability to follow the Steinberg

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

baton that moved all around the beats but never on them. The performance of Schubert's *Rosamunde* Overture came off well; but Schubert's great C-major Symphony lacked the sustained continuity of tempo, shape and momentum it requires to make its effect. And I regretted the waste on the Liszt transcription of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* of the distinguished powers of Grant Johannesen that might have been devoted to one of the Mozart concertos. At another concert in the series the Royal Philharmonic revealed its deterioration since it played here under Beecham; and Georges Prêtre revealed his inadequacies as a symphonic conductor.

At the Concert Opera Association performance of Verdi's unfamiliar *I Vespri Siciliani* the first quiet phrases of the overture seized my mind very much as Glenn Goulds's playing of the first phrases of a Bach Partita had done; and the power that made itself felt here operated elsewhere in the work, not only in occasional melodic writing of great beauty and expressiveness, but in supporting orchestral writing to whose detail Verdi clearly had given the thought and care that eventually was to produce the wonderfully free, resourceful and imaginative orchestral writing of the later operas. *I Vespri* has its absurdities—e.g. the music at the beginning of the ball scene of Act 3; but its impressive pages are enough to make one grateful even for a performance with a tenor so bad that for the first time in my experience there was booing, and with Nicola Moscona, whose bass by now produces mostly a wobble that obscures pitch. Giuseppe Taddei used authoritative style to make up for the deficiencies of a worn baritone; and Irene Jordan, though her soprano showed losses, had enough left to sing her taxing role effectively.

Thomas Dunn and the Festival Associates offered four of the versions of *Messiah* that Handel prepared for performances at different times and places—each embodying changes he made in the arias for the different soloists—of which I heard the version for the Foundling Hospital benefit on May 15, 1754. Authenticity was sought by the use of a chorus and orchestra of the size used by Handel, and by the introduction into the solos of a certain amount of the ornamentation that was introduced in the performances of Handel's time; but the performance with these small forces took place not in the small auditorium of Handel's day, nor even in Carnegie Hall with its acoustic intimacy, but in Philharmonic Hall, where the sonorities—except for the few big tuttis employing trumpets and drums—sounded like something small heard in vast space. And while some of the solos were sung effectively by the mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff and the tenor Charles Bressler and agreeably by the soprano Yvonne Cianella, others suffered from the less attractive soprano voice of Sara Endich and the extremely unattractive bass-baritone of Donald Gramm.

With both Allegra Kent and Violette Verdy absent the first two weeks of the New York City Ballet's winter season, the rising younger

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dancers made impressive appearances in additional first-line roles. The opening *Divertimento No. 15,* for example, had—with only Patricia Wilde of earlier casts—Mimi Paul, Suki Schorer, Carol Sumner and Victoria Simon, all operating beautifully, but Mimi Paul standing out among them in the impassioned elegance of her style—notably in the arabesques and lifts of the Adagio in which she was supported by Erik Bruhn. And outstanding too was the unstraining finish and elegance of Bruhn's variation. A night later Mimi Paul's performance in the second movement of *Symphony in C* was made even more effective than it had been by an additional fluidity of the arms that now initiated, now completed the lovely movements of the rest of her body. And in the first movement Patricia McBride exhibited, in addition to her accuracy and clarity, an exquisite fluidity of arms enlivened by a new energy.

Then there was Suzanne Farrell's performance in the first of Balanchine's new works, *Meditation,* to a Tchaikovsky piece for violin and orchestra. This was a *pas de deux* astonishingly different from any of Balanchine's separate *pas de deux* in that it had an expressive content—the boy's intense grief, from which the girl drew him with her love—and that it conveyed this content not only through the beautiful dance metaphors of Balanchine's usual practice, but also directly and explicitly through expressive movements, facial expressions and desperate embraces such as I don't recall his using before. Farrell exhibited again the secure fluidity that had made her movements excitingly beautiful in an impersonal work like *Concerto Barocco,* and with this an unexpected and deeply moving projection of the personal emotion of the new piece. And another surprise was to see Jacques d'Amboise completely convincing and moving in a serious role. In large part this was caused by an important change in his physical appearance: instead of the hair neatly parted on the side that gave us in *Swan Lake* or *Apollo* the face of a clean-cut lad from Dedham, Mass., there was now a wig that changed the face astonishingly to that of a boy—any boy anywhere—sunk in grief. He should use it in those other roles.

I thought I had an explanation of the enriching changes in Mimi Paul's dancing when Verdy returned and I saw her in *The Nutcracker, Episodes* and *Swan Lake:* clearly Mimi Paul had been looking at Verdy too—at her special elegance of style, and in this the particular elegant fluidity of her arms. There was an overwhelming demonstration of this at the very beginning of *Swan Lake,* just before Odette comes face to face with Prince Siegfried (danced beautifully on this occasion by Edward Villella): the flow of her arms above her head and around her body was newly elaborated in a way that made it the most beautiful I had ever seen. I thought I saw additional new details throughout the work—some with new dramatic point, some with new dance effect; and every dazzling movement had her extraordinary exactness and perfection of execution.

Balanchine's other new *pas de deux, Tarantella,* to music of Gott-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

schalk, was a delightful *perpetuum mobile* of blended Italian-style and ballet movements for an engagingly brilliant Villella and vivacious McBride. But a far more important new achievement of Villella was his first performance in *Apollo*. It has been difficult to understand Balanchine's not being bothered by d'Amboise's stiffness and pompousness in this work; his not preferring the beautifully sensitive performance of Conrad Ludlow two years ago; and—when he was not satisfied with Ludlow—his not having Villella perform in it. The delay gave Villella time for a lot of thinking about the role, which showed itself in details like the new-born Apollo's unsteadiness on his feet, his attentive watching of the muses in their solos; but more important was the characteristic relaxed grace of his operation and the beauty this gave to his movements. One of the impressive moments of d'Amboise's performance is his grandly soaring leaps around the lined-up muses in the *pas d'action,* which I had thought no one could equal; and I was unprepared, therefore, to see Villella not only do the leaps themselves with similar impressiveness but come down after each in a configuration of his body that was far more beautiful than d'Amboise's. Of the dancers who appeared with Villella in the work for the first time, Suki Schorer offered a performance of Calliope's solo that was completely achieved in its clarity and continuity; but Carol Sumner hadn't yet mastered the movements of Polyhymnia's solo, and McBride didn't get beyond the mere conscientious execution of the movements of Terpsichore's. And I should mention here that in the performances of *Apollo* with d'Amboise Mimi Paul's Calliope was another of her distinguished achievements, but Melissa Hayden didn't present an image one could accept as Terpsichore's.

Balanchine also revived one of his *pas de deux* for the display of virtuosity, *Waltz Scherzo*—the kind of piece in which d'Amboise is delightful and Patricia Wilde is at her best.

Hearing again the 1937-38 and 1938-39 series of Toscanini's broadcasts with the NBC Symphony that were rebroadcast by WRVR in New York a year ago was a fascinating and instructive experience. And one thing that was striking in these early performances, as against the later ones, was their energy and fire. To a degree it was the energy of Toscanini himself in those years, which one can hear in the performances of Rossini's Overtures to *Semiramide* and *L'Italiana in Algeri* that he recorded with the New York Philharmonic in 1936. But only to a degree: in addition Toscanini in 1937 operated under very different conditions—which is to say with a very different orchestra. All his life he had conducted orchestras made up predominantly of middle-aged men with years of orchestral experience and routine; but in December 1937, for the first time, he found himself facing an orchestra made up largely of young men—notably the large number of brilliant young string-players who had been induced to leave the concert stage and positions in string quartets for membership in the group within

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the NBC staff orchestra that was to be conducted by Toscanini as the NBC Symphony. Their virtuoso capacities, their youthful vitality and capacity for warm response that had not been dulled by years of playing in orchestras under ordinary conductors—these were something new for him, and something which delighted and stimulated him; and they in turn were delighted and enormously stimulated by the extraordinary powers, the magnetism, the dedication of this conductor. The mutual stimulation produced playing which didn't exhibit the refinement of execution and beautifully blended tone the orchestra had after years of playing with him, but which did exhibit the breathtaking energy and fire that the performances of the 50's, however marvelous in other ways, no longer had.

One of the young string-players was a violinist named Samuel Antek, an intelligent and articulate musician whom I got to know and found interesting to talk with at the rehearsals. In 1950, a *Saturday Review* greeting to Toscanini on his 83rd birthday included an article by Antek, *Playing With the Maestro,* which was an excellent account of the Toscanini manner of working with the orchestra, and the powers and personal characteristics that caused the players to revere and love Toscanini as they did no other conductor; and this article Antek later elaborated into the text that has now been published in the book *This Was Toscanini.*[1] One result of the elaboration is that what was originally compact is now somewhat florid in thought and expression; but the essentials of what Antek reported about Toscanini the musician, the conductor, the man are unchanged. And what he tells in words Robert Hupka makes powerfully real with the many superb photographs he took of Toscanini in action at rehearsals. To read what Antek says about that wonderful man, to remember what it describes, to see it recreated before one's eyes by Hupka's photographs, is a moving experience.

Whereas Antek writes about Toscanini as an insider—someone who himself rehearsed and played under Toscanini and tells us about this what only an insider can tell—Bernard Taper writes about Balanchine[2] as an outsider—an intelligent, sensitive and perceptive outsider who gives us a great amount of interesting information about the life and work of one of the century's great creative artists—for example, what some of his fellow-students in the ballet school in St. Petersburg still remember about his gifts as a dancer and a musician and his first pieces of choreography; but nevertheless an outsider, who cannot tell us what an insider, someone with a dancer's eye and a dancer's knowledge of his special world, could tell. That is the reason for certain deficiencies of the book, but not for others—such as its tone. It is, rather, Taper's cheerful good nature that is responsible for the unvarying cheerfulness of the narrative, which is a deficiency since the realities of what he is

[1] THIS WAS TOSCANINI, by *Samuel Antek,* with photographs by *Robert Hupka.* Vanguard. $17.50.

[2] BALANCHINE, by *Benrard Taper.* Harper. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reporting—whether of Balanchine's life or of the dancer's world behind the smiling facade of the stage performance, the quietly pleasant facade of the rehearsal studio—include unhappiness and unpleasantness. Certainly, the miseries of Balanchine's marriage with X——— are something Taper couldn't be explicit about; but someone with a different temperament, writing about the marriage with awareness of them, would not, as Taper does, give the impression that there was nothing but the amusingly odd actions of Balanchine and his wife. Moreover, the relentless hostility of John Martin in *The Times* from the beginning of Balanchine's work in this country until a few years ago is something Taper *could* be explicit about; it constituted a major obstacle which a complete and accurate account of that work *would* be explicit about, and which anyone who felt strongly about it would document at the length it called for; and I conclude that it was Taper's peaceable good nature that caused him to regard the three or four sentences of Martin that he quotes at intervals as adequate treatment of the matter—which they are not.

It is in dealing with Balanchine's works that Taper exhibits the deficiencies of an outsider. They could be compensated for by photographs showing what he doesn't describe in the ballets; and they are, but not to the degree they could and should be. Part of the budget of photographic documentation had to be allotted to other purposes; and the photographs of Balanchine in the rehearsal studio are fascinating —especially the ones in which he is demonstrating a movement to a dancer and showing, without intending it, how much more exciting he is to see in a role than the dancer who does it on the stage. But some of the photographs allotted to the biography are wasted on trivialities; and I find similar poor judgment in the selection of photographs of the ballets. The Balanchine issue of *Dance Index* years ago had six photographs of some of the outstanding moments of the *pas d'action* and *pas de deux* of *Apollo* in the beautiful 1941 performance with Lew Christensen and Marie-Jeanne, which not only documented those moments but conveyed the serenity and grandeur of the work; it had three photographs of such moments in the middle movement of *Concerto Barocco,* another of Balanchine's greatest achievements, in the beautiful 1941 performance with Marie-Jeanne and William Dollar; and it would have been good judgment to use these photographs to document these choreographies—instead of which the book offers no documentation at all of the middle movement of *Concerto Barocco* and a couple of two-page montages of a large number of photographs of recent performances of *Apollo* with d'Amboise in which the details of the *pas d'action* and *pas de deux* are part of a confusion of legs and arms that doesn't convey the serenity and grandeur of the work. The outstanding *Pas de Deux* of *Agon* is treated in the same way; and for *Four Temperaments* we get a single photograph of a leap by Tallchief that could be a leap in any ballet, instead of some of the unusual details of the Sanguinic Variation in which that leap occurs, or some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the marvelous inventions of the third part of the Theme. Of *Danses Concertantes* we get only one photograph, of *Sonnambula* two, none of them concerned with the outstanding moments that should be documented. Taper writes that many who saw *Cotillon* regard it as Balanchine's masterpiece; but instead of photographs of the movements of the Hand of Fate *pas de deux* or other wonderful things in this masterpiece we get only a photograph of Toumanova in her costume.

The Stravinsky-Craft *Dialogues and a Diary*[3] has a fourth installment of Stravinsky comments and recollections in answer to Craft questions, and Craft's diary of his travels with Stravinsky, including the visit to Russia in 1962. Craft's ironically, irreverently and amusingly perceptive writing, light and deft in style, is in striking contrast to the sardonic and grim statements attributed to Stravinsky in the conversations, and provides conclusive proof that those statements are Stravinsky's own and not, as Lang contended, Craft's spoken through a ventriloquist's dummy named Stravinsky.

[3] DIALOGUES AND A DIARY, by *Igor Stravinsky* and *Robert Craft*. Doubleday. $4.95.

KENNETH BURKE

On Form

THESE OBSERVATIONS are offered in connection with the exceptionally interesting article, "The End of the Renaissance," by Leonard B. Meyer, in the Summer, 1963, issue of *The Hudson Review*. The piece is brilliantly effective in building up a contrast between what the author calls traditional "teleological" music and certain contemporary "anti-teleological," "unkinetic," or "static" trends. Thus it is primarily concerned with these new methods in music, and with the theory on which they are based. Also, in the course of making his point, Dr. Meyer says many things that help me reenforce and qualify some speculations on literary form as developed in my book, *Counter-Statement* (particularly the essays, "Psychology and Form" and "Lexicon Rhetoricae"). And I dare hope that some readers may be interested in considering the subject a bit further, fortunately in the spirit of discussion rather than of controversy.

First, as for the theory in its simplicity, let me quote a paragraph from a talk I gave when restating my definition two years ago at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Midwest Theatre Conference, Summer 1961 (a greatly condensed version of the talk appeared in the *University of Chicago Magazine,* October 1961):

> The theory to which I subscribed when first thinking of form in classical drama involved a definition of form as the arousing and fulfilling of expectations in the audience. That is, form in literature is an arousing and fulfilling of desires: one part of a work leads the reader to anticipate another part and to be gratified by the sequence. This notion of fulfilling of desires can also be treated as a fulfilling of expectations because one or the other of those terms will bring out one or another aspect of that problem.

The shift between "desire" and "expectation" involves a difference of emphasis. In a tragedy, for instance, the destruction of the hero may be "logically" indicated, regardless of our sympathies. Here the term "expectation" would fit best. The principle of "poetic justice" (with the triumph of good and the vanquishing of evil) would be the clearest instance of developments for which the term "desire" would be a better fit. But in any classically constructed work, the two principles will cooperate. And even when our beloved or admired hero goes to his inevitable doom, the work is "formally correct" only insofar as, in a profounder sense, we are brought to *will* his sacrifice. (Sadistic and masochistic trends in poetry readily lead to a departure from such tests.)

In my "Lexicon Rhetoricae" the general principle of such "fulfillment" was, as they would say now, "broken down" into subdivisions, which will be considered later.[1] At present the important consideration is the fact that the concept of "fulfillment" can itself be found to reveal a quite different set of implications. Thus whereas, for a long time, I had worked with the distinction between "self-expression" and "communication" (and with schemes whereby the two variously correct or reenforce each other), I gradually came to realize that some such third term as "consummation" was needed, for the discussion of formal principles. If anyone is interested, the subject is explicitly discussed in the last two pages of my article on Richard Blackmur, "The Criticism of Criticism," in the Autumn 1955 issue of *Accent.* (The matter is also discussed, from a more general point of view, in an article, "Motion, Action, Words," that appeared in the December 1960 issue of *Teachers College Record.*)

The point, briefly, is this: In my studies of terminology, I came to see how inexorably certain directions of thought (with corresponding

[1] Though my primary concern is with the application of these various subdivisions to literature, if the reader is interested in their relation to music I could refer to *Chopin, The Man and His Music* (Knopf, 1949), by the expert musicologist, Herbert Weinstock. See the chapter, "An Introductory Note on Musical Form," where the author shows how the various subdivisions of form (as schematized in my "Lexicon Rhetoricae") can be applied to the music of Chopin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conclusions or "fulfillments") are implicit in the nature of the terms we use when confronting a given problem, or situation. (Simplest example: The difference between Darwinian and Fundamentalist statements about human motives.) A terminology is a kind of photographic "screen" which will "let through" some perceptions and "filter out" others. I began to suspect that this fact about the nature of "terministic screens" is the sheerly technical or "logological" counterpart of the theological formula, "believe that you may understand" (*crede ut intelligas*). Technically, the choice of a terminology in terms of which to state one's proposition is equivalent to the "act of faith" (*credere*) through which one can arrive at understanding (*intelligere*). And the *tracking down of the implications in a terminology* (as with physicists making bombs or biologists breeding pedigreed bugs for possible use in bacteriological war) is not just an example of either "self-expression" or "communication," but of "consummation." Thus, in the talk I gave at Chicago, I tried to analyze Ionesco's play, *Victims of Duty*, as a "consummatory" way of developing the implications of the title (naturally, within the limits of the author's insights).

For Dr. Meyer's succinct preparatory statement about the principle of expectation as operative in classical musical form, see the paragraph beginning at the bottom of p. 172. But as regards the main burden of his article (his concern with the "anti-teleological" element in "random or indeterminate music"), I submit that much of the theory and corresponding practices discussed in the article would clearly fall under the head of what I would treat in terms of "consummation," or "tracking down the implications of a terminology." For, just as the principle of consummation in literature may lead a writer to kinds of discovery not directly attributable to either self-expression or communication as motive, so the efficiently end-of-the-line "anti-teleological" kind of music is presented by its theorists in terms that reject both self-expression and communication as musical aims. Also, in detailing so graphically the tie-up between the rationale for such music and the methods for producing it, Dr. Meyer shows us an almost perfect instance of "consummation" (at least such consummatory thoroughness as may be exemplified by the tracking down of implications in specialized scientific terminologies).

But though Dr. Meyer's article clearly indicates how the principle of *consummation* may lead to the flouting of *communication* (and its kinds of "meaningfulness") as an artist's proclaimed criterion of workmanship, the fact remains that, insofar as a work does arouse an audience's interest, it can do so only by embodying some principles of appeal. That is, to the extent that the product engages our attention it necessarily confronts tests of communication.

A person who talks to us excitedly in a language we do not understand will at the least "communicate" to us his state of excitement—and similarly, the "random and indeterminate" inventions of contemporary musical gadgetry must if nothing else engage us by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evidence of their inventiveness, however much the planning and results may differ from the "teleological" inventiveness of a Bach fugue.

A poem might conceivably be composed by sheer accident (for instance, by picking up pied type and arranging the letters in arbitrary order with one's eyes shut). Yet regardless of its *random origins,* when we turn our attention to the record of these accidents we are automatically or inevitably involved in the *laws* of their appeal. For when an art object engages our attention, by the sheer nature of the case we are involved in at least as much of a *communicative* relationship as prevails between a pitchman and a prospective customer. Whether or not a work is *designed* to "entertain," it can claim our suffrage or our sufferance only insofar as, by hook or crook, it *does* "entertain" in some way or other.

We might sum up the point thus: A theory of form as sheerly *aleatory* would not suffice for a discussion of a work's *reception* when read or performed, even if the work did arise by *wholly* aleatory processes (considerations which, so far at least, do not seem to have been met). Regardless of what a work was designed to do, and regardless of how that design (or paradoxical lack of design) came into being, if ever the work is presented to an audience it must be treated *as though* designed to hold the attention of an audience. For such a principle is implicit in the very nature of attention, which can't be attentive without, by the same token, implying that the object of attention is in some respect there to be attended to.

Maybe I keep saying this over and over again because it's like trying to disprove the metaphysical doctrine of solipsism, which is impervious to contradiction, even though, if *I* tell *you* solipsistically that the world is all in *my* mind, *you* know that it is not, and if *you* tell *me* solipsistically that the world is all in *your* mind, *I* know that it is not. Obviously, such "refutation" must begin by positing the reality of an audience *outside* the realm of the solipsist's powers of creation (in brief a *social* situation which is precisely what solipsism rules out).

Fortunately, the theory of aleatory music *does* concede the existence of an audience, since we are told what kind of attention such an audience is expected to cultivate for the appreciation of each sound, in and for itself, without regard for its relation to other sounds in the same sequence. But the injunction to ignore the relatedness of sounds in a sequence (even while the inventor spends so much time gambling to set up a sequence however fluctuant), suggests to me somewhat those courtroom situations where a lawyer schemes to bring some point before a jury, even though he knows in advance that the judge will instruct the jury to disregard it. Show me two "unrelated" things, one after the other—and willy-nilly, you have built up for me a relationship between them, no matter how much I am told to disregard it.

So, in accordance with the proposition that no critic is required

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to accept without question any artists' formulation of the principles said by them or their spokesmen to be embodied in their art; and in accordance with the related proposition that criticism's efforts to translate any kind of *poetry* into terms of its corresponding *poetics* should not cease until all elements seem adequately accounted for, I'd still maintain that, no matter how "random and indeterminate" may be the (almost *pedantically* planned) conditions under which such works arise, the nature of their *origins* can not adequately account for any claim they may make upon our attention. Ergo, so far as criticism is concerned, the search for the rules of their appeal (if any) must continue.

At this point, a whole new set of avowals presents itself for consideration. And whereas I began by rejoicing at the opportunity to enlist Dr. Meyer's excellent essay in my cause (as regards the laws of appeal embodied in classical art), I now want to introduce these other considerations.

Happily, they are not in basic conflict with his distinction between the "teleological" and "anti-teleological" (the teleological anti-teleology of planned planlessness), which is primarily concerned with certain musicians' rationale and methods of *production*. For I am shifting the emphasis to considerations of *reception*, which I contend necessarily involves *some kind* of *communicative* test, insofar as it involves *any* presentation of the works before an audience. In brief, unless the inventors of this music are willing to produce it and perform it without ever letting it be witnessed by an audience, questions of communication necessarily figure. Otherwise, there is no point to the musicians' *exhibiting* the results of their *partially* random inventions. To exhibit is necessarily to solicit attention, however coy or gruff or self-indulgent or self-protective may be one's ways of setting up the situation.

I say *partially* random because (as per earlier remarks on the *crede, ut intelligas* principle) many decisive departures from sheer randomness were already inherent in whatever particular kind of "random situation" the experimenter set up for a given aleatory enterprise. Even a pack of cards shuffled and dealt at random is by the nature of the case a selection of *one particular nomenclature* in terms of which the randomness is to be experienced. And since any art is a species of symbolic action, each art is necessarily "de-termined" by the particular nature of the terms through which it acts. The question thus gets down to this: Despite the obvious physicality of sound, is the *act* of musical production reducible to sheer *motion*? And even if the act of musical *production* is so reducible, is the act of *audience participation* similarly reducible to terms of sheer motion? Or is it not inevitable that, just as the musician *acts* by selecting the particular kind of situation in terms of which he will let random *motions* take their course, so an audience *acts* by consenting to let its attention follow in these particular grooves. The appreciation of a sound qua sound is an ap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

preciation of an *essence* for its own sake. And as Santayana's philosophy makes clear, nothing could be more thoroughly in the realm of "Spirit." (That is, nothing could be more thoroughly in the realm of *symbolic action.*)

Have I hung on too long? It was hard to resist! For I feel that the very thoroughness of this supposed "break" with past criteria helps all the more to point up the justification for those criteria. Obviously, however, if any criteria of classical "teleological" form are to be applied with regard to forms that arise with combinations like those due to a throw of dice, the principles must at least be applied with a difference.

The following considerations, then, seem particularly relevant to Dr. Meyer's article:

(1) Apparently "anti-teleological" form quite thoroughly dispenses with what I'd call "syllogistic" progression (works deliberately so constructed that they lead in an arrowlike directedness towards a culmination and resolution).

(2) But for that very reason, much of such music should accommodate itself exceptionally well to what I'd call "minor or incidental" forms, brief episodes often so sharply demarcated that they can be appreciated one by one, like epigrams. (However, I have already indicated why such a stress upon a sequence of such details in themselves cannot wholly avoid a sense of *relatedness* among successive steps in the sequence.)

(3) The works might be found to possess a high degree of what I'd call "conventional" form (or "categorical expectancy"), once you get over the tendency to think of new conventions purely in terms of their "break" with past conventions. Conventional form is no less conventional simply because it happens to embody new conventions which set up correspondingly new kinds of expectation. Indeed, the "experimental" aspect of much modern work (at least partly an esthetic reflection of the scientific attitude towards the methods of the laboratory) awakens in us a kind of expectation that can make us categorically receptive to novelty, even to the extent where we would resent too great similarity to the kinds of expectation associated with sheerly traditional art-forms.

(3-*a*) In particular, at this point, could we not introduce our principle of "negative" expectation (a later concept, not discussed in the "Lexicon Rhetoricae")? When a few moments of avant-garde music are played, you may experience none of the keenly "teleological" anticipation that you find, say, in a phrase by Mozart, where the announcement of an antecedent prepares you for its completion in a "logically" related consequent. But in almost no time, you sense what kind of sound *not* to expect. Indeed, the new conventions quickly set up a whole set of *categorical* expectations that, however tentative, almost *tyrannically* rule out kinds of sound we had learned to expect in connection with past norms of conventional form.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(3-*b*) Perhaps the notion of "negative" expectation is but a slightly different slant on what I originally called "qualitative" progression: a turn which is not directly expected, but which, when it arrives, is received as the kind of surprise, or contrast, or ellipsis (or "leap") that somehow "fits" the situation (thereby indicating that the conditions for this turn were implicitly, or "naturally," present).

(4) And most important of all, there is repetitive form, perhaps the most compelling of all expectations, the requirement that, in some strategic respect, *the same general kind of procedure* will be maintained throughout a given work. Just as Kant says that the human mind can't avoid thinking in terms of substance, so I'd contend that, insofar as a work is identifiable at all, it must to that extent possess a measure of substance (some kind of "unity," however loose) that would fall under the heading of repetitive form, and that thus gratifies our expectations by going on being the kind of thing we tend to expect, however great the surprises and variations encountered en route.

In sum, then: If to these various kinds of expectancy and the principle of consummation, we add the fragmentation and perversion or sophistication (extension and over-simplification) of classical formal principles, might even "random and indeterminate" music be analyzed as less of a break with traditional poetic principles than it might otherwise appear to be? Indeed, if you'll admit such a chart of continuous terms as I indicate on p. 145 of *Permanence and Change* (Hermes Edition) could we not treat even an audience's interest in new sounds for their own sake as involving but the variation of a quite "classical" response, the appeal of "wonder"?

I say as much, not through any basic resistance to any experiments now being undertaken by contemporary artists in any field, but owing to my investment in a theory of "symbolic action." And though I find much to sympathize with in aesthetic cults of sheer motion, I take it that any such cults are necessarily "Isms," hence in the realm of *action*. Accordingly, since classical models of poetic theory take for granted a Dramatistic view of man, I hold it most likely that principles of poetics based on the analysis of classical models will be found applicable to all modes of symbolic action (such as I take all artistic styles to be), once we approach new work, not by asking that it abide by classical models, but by asking wherein it *modifies* classical models. Hence we resist only at the point where, in any manifesto, we are assured that some recent kind of symbolic action is really as much of a break with traditional poetic principles as it might otherwise seem to be. Such claims are likely to be more worthy of study as advertising or as revelations of artists' psychology than as poetics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

Man Alive[1]

BEFORE THE DAM OF CENSORSHIP caved in some half-dozen years ago, *Making Do* could not have been legally published in the United States. More to the point, it would probably not have been written. We know that Jean Genet is a sexual outlaw as well as the more ordinary variety of criminal, he tells us so himself; that Henry Miller is a sort of dithyrambic hobo; that Burroughs and Rechy are not co-chairmen of the local P. T. A.: they are given up to their demons, we say, and would write as they do come hell or the Olympia Press. They are different from us, and we read their books—those adventures of their hectic blood—in the comfort of our uncontaminated remoteness, like a gallery of analysts or voyeurs. Paul Goodman, on the other hand, is not different at all. He is a citizen, he tells us so in his essays, where he identifies himself as husband, father, community planner, psychotherapist, member of TV panels on juvenile delinquency, consultant to Presidential commissions; his book-jackets show a kindly-looking, bespectacled, middle-aged man. The sometime narrator of *Making Do* is husband, father, community planner, psychotherapist, member of TV panels on juvenile delinquency, consultant to Presidential commissions; a kindly, bespectacled, middle-aged man who offers "utopian proposals that . . . [are] practical" (Goodman has a book entitled *Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals*). *Making Do* might be subtitled, without irony, "Adventures of a Citizen"; and the citizen is, either ostentatiously or artlessly, a facsimile of Citizen Goodman.

The author will not permit us our usual detachment—what we maintain toward the most explicit case-history in a journal of sexual

[1] MAKING DO, by *Paul Goodman*. Macmillan. $4.95. A MAN AND TWO WOMEN AND OTHER STORIES, by *Doris Lessing*. Simon and Schuster. $5.00. CLIFFS OF FALL AND OTHER STORIES, by *Shirley Hazzard*. Knopf. $3.95. JOANNA AND ULYSSES, by *May Sarton*. Norton. $3.95. THE LITTLE GIRLS, by *Elizabeth Bowen*. Knopf. $4.95. A SLANTING LIGHT, by *Gerda Charles*. Knopf. $4.95. THE WAPSHOT SCANDAL, by *John Cheever*. Harper & Row. $4.95. THE STONE FACE, by *William Gardner Smith*. Farrar, Straus. $4.50. FIFTH PLANET, by *Fred Hoyle* and *Geoffrey Hoyle*. Harper and Row. $3.50. THE RAGMAN'S DAUGHTER AND OTHER STORIES, by *Alan Sillitoe*. Knopf. $3.95. A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME (Vol. I: A QUESTION OF UPBRINGING, A BUYER'S MARKET, THE ACCEPTANCE WORLD; Vol. II: AT LADY MOLLY'S, CASANOVA'S CHINESE RESTAURANT, THE KINDLY ONES), by *Anthony Powell*. Little, Brown. $5.95 per volume. THE ELEPHANT, by *Slawomir Mrozek*. Grove. $3.95. GOGOL'S WIFE AND OTHER STORIES, by *Tommaso Landolfi*. New Directions. $4.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychology (into which the materials of Goodman's novel might have gone a decade ago), toward the black-mass disclosures of such strenuous outsiders as Genet and Burroughs. Goodman is not less commonplace and respectable than we are; as straightforwardly as the form or pretense of fiction allows, his narrator is the author himself, and thus ourselves. The book might be an outrage, an unprecedented invasion of privacy, an act of courage and candor. It might persuade us to wonder whether, for instance, physical contact—heterosexual, pederastic, onanistic—can be as full of joy and as free of guilt, as immediate, as easy to take or leave, as the book suggests it is for the narrator. We withdraw, however, only slightly ruffled, to our usual distance because *Making Do* is scarcely a novel at all, not even a bad novel, nor is it less inept as a clinical memoir. Its "dissident community" is a group-therapy waxworks of mixed-up Puerto Rican adolescents, young lovers trapped by pregnancy, a resident earth-mother, an impotent homosexual; its naturalism—even when the language is fit for *The New York Times*—has the relentless sentimentality of do-it-yourself best-sellers on the latest art of loving, as in this chromo of the troubled college boy and our kindly, bespectacled head-shrinker:

> Lovingly he opened the can of apricots. For me. He favored a packaged dry cereal called Wheat-Chex, but for me he obsessionally had the can of apricots or pears that he knew I liked—I had once bought it—with heavy cream. I had an inkling how much security he got, which he badly needed, from this ritual of contenting me and sharing the hour. He was looking at me as I lapped it up. "I love you, Terry," I formed with my lips. He was as if thunderstruck. Perhaps it was amazement at the simplicity of his own feeling, whatever it was. I was not embarrassed but in pain, because I wanted to give him confidence in himself as well as in me, or instead of in me, and I didn't know how.

Or in these gripping instants: "He burst out laughing for the first time since the last time they resumed the atom-bomb testing"; "Was there time? Would he crack up before he found himself?"; "I spoke to the City Planning Commission and made an appointment for the late afternoon, after I got back from Trenton, to put in my two cents about the proposed Downtown Expressway. We'd see about subsidizing the suburbs any further!" After such pleasures, Reichian catchwords and ban-the-bomb pacifism—not to mention the unimpeded genitality of civic-minded middle age—seem pretty tame.

Fiction, Lawrence remarked, deals with man alive, all of him. It is a great blundering breaker of partitions and reticences, till—if we cannot put it down as bad art—we cry out against its bullying candor; it resembles libel often, it tells the truth and makes us gape and wince like the Dubliners on whom, for having lived as they did, Joyce so imperially revenged himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the first story ("One Off the Short List") of Mrs. Lessing's collection, the protagonist is a failed writer who has "drifted into radio, television, book reviewing," and the woman is a set designer whom, in accordance with a strategy he has successfully used time after time, he intends to add to his list of significant conquests. He is not a bad or stupid man, just a failure, in his work and in his marriage; he knows himself, and he knows his modest talent for seduction, and sets about exercising it. Whereupon he discovers that at every step the woman knows him too, holds him off not even ironically, sees through every genteel move and word, till in his frustration he has no tactical alternative to rape; that even rape is denied him, as, having exhausted reason, she submits to his foolishness; that, being not a bad man, he is impotent in his shameful need till she helps him from her simple wish to be rid of him; that he cannot, till he finally must, release her from the ruins of his male ego:

> While she had been lying there, she had been thinking: The only way to get this over with is to make him big again, otherwise I've got to put up with him all night. His hatred of her was giving him a clairvoyance: he knew very well what went on through her mind. She had switched on, with the determination to *get it all over with,* a sensual good humour, a patience. He lay down. She squatted beside him, the light from the ceiling blooming on her brown shoulders, her flat fair hair falling over her face. But she would not look at his face. Like a bored, skilled wife, she was; or like a prostitute. She administered to him, she was setting herself to please him. Yes, he thought, she's sensual, or she could be. Meanwhile she was succeeding in defeating the reluctance of his flesh, which was the tender token of a possible desire for her, by using a cold skill that was the result of her contempt for him. Just as he decided: Right, it's enough, now I shall have her properly, she made him come. It was not a trick, to hurry or cheat him, what defeated him was her transparent thought: Yes, that's what he's worth.

The attitude is not, as Mary McCarthy's is, catty amusement at the old bad joke of man's ignominy and woman's conscious dominating will in the dirty game of sex. Mrs. Lessing's man has made himself what he is though he needn't have, the woman who defeats him turns her icy will against him because "that's what he's worth"—not men, but this man, who is only the consequence of his choices. As, out here, we are.

Mrs. Lessing writes a prose that at its frequent best traces atmospheric variations as exquisitely as the stylus of a barograph. It is not a woman's prose; or, rather, though it is identifiably female, it is not feminine, it does not smother the reader with its soft assurance of an unfathomable sensibility. The other stories in her volume are equally precise registrations of atmospheres, conditions of being, seismic readjustments: if they are less impressive than the first, the reason seems to be that Mrs. Lessing is splendidly ambitious, that she takes on all sorts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of subjects some of which have literary or nostalgic resonance rather than present interest for her. There are, for example, several genre pieces set in the white planter's Africa of her youth; a good Lawrence story; a good Colette story; several provocative but unfocused fantasies; one mere shocker about brother-sister incest. The last story, "To Room Nineteen," is an account, all stages sinisterly realized, of the disintegration of an ideal bourgeois marriage; but the story is a brilliant failure, the author is so full of loathing for the circumstances of the marriage that she refuses to let her characters breathe.

If you're tired of candor and looking for feminine sensibility, *Cliffs of Fall* (or *The New Yorker,* in which most of these stories first appeared) has buckets of it. Here it is, poured out over men:

> She thought that the digressions in the minds of men were endless. How many disguises were assumed before they could face themselves. How many justifications made in order that they might simply please themselves. How dangerous they were in their self-righteousness—infinitely more dangerous than women, who could never persuade themselves to the same degree of the nobility of their actions.

Or: "So he, too, is only concerned with himself, she reflected"; "What cowards men are, she thought"; "One can't ask to be alone, she thought, or not to be touched, even once in a great while, without creating a scene . . ."; "*He* is not vulnerable, she reflected." The feminine sensibility assumes that women are always being victimized by the inferior sensibilities of men, those brutish and childishly scrutable creatures:

> He had no idea of what she was like, none whatever. To this day, she was sure, he thought her trivial, almost frivolous. (And she was actually an acutely sensitive person.) No wonder they found nothing to say to one another now.

The feminine sensibility is acutely sensitive to words (" 'Of course, I'm an incurable romantic,' Vernon was saying. He made it sound like a disease"), as well as to those symbolic moments which throb with poetic allusiveness and the flaring nostrils of passion:

> "Oh, Marina." He fell on his knees beside her, his hands still full of the sticks from behind the shed. "Marina."
>
> She looked up abruptly. Kneeling, they stared at each other.
>
> His eyes dazzled. He lifted his closed hands. "I could only find the small sticks."
>
> She was very pale. For an instant, he could imagine how she might look if she were ever to lose her composure.
>
> She sat back on her heels. "They must be there," she said. "I'll go and look." She got up and left him on his knees in the grass, his hands extended and full of short, blunt sticks.

Get it? All of it? Now drop it, and not just anywhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joanna and Ulysses dramatizes the encounter of the feminine sensibility ("For a month she was to give herself to joy, to paint, to think, to feel youth, buried so long, rising up in her like sap into the branches of a battered tree") with a charming little donkey:

> Within, she heard the donkey relieving himself.
> "Dear soul, you are safe," she murmured . . .

In *The Little Girls,* the feminine sensibility puts on its coy and puckish face: "Mrs. Coral, implacably raising the mesh bag . . ."; "Terrified, the rose leaped from her buttonhole"; "the sea of tables was disembellished neither by crumb nor speck"; "at dead of teatime." It also practices a sort of pidgin-Irish, sentences dizzy with inexplicable (and occasionally illiterate) inversions and elisions: "Of inferior calibre did she find them"; " 'No, more I mean, in what other way should I do it?' "; "Dote, however, he always had, so he did"; "Liked, the song seemed on whole known"; "Nothing did she say, so they set off." For those who wish to be instructed as well as entertained, it can be said that *The Little Girls* seems intended as a comedy of manners with a serious dénouement.

In *A Slanting Light,* the feminine sensibility makes a formidable appearance in the person of the narrator, a gorgon of hysterical self-righteousness whom the author smugly regards as a model of wronged wifely virtues. The frame of the novel is about as odd and arbitrary as possible: a series of letters from a woman who, having just left her husband, expresses her disgust for him and her refusal ever to hear from him again, and describes the minutiae of her new life (as housekeeper to a visiting American playwright and his family) and new interests—to her husband! No, there is no elaborate neurotic situation on the author's mind; this acutely sensitive woman is merely gouging out chunks of her husband's flesh—he still loves her, poor dear!—in return for all the misery he has inflicted on her refined spirit by being so crass, so uncultivated, so dull, so *English*:

> Can you see yourself as Monsieur Bovary? No. For the simple reason that you have never read the book. This is another example of what I mean about provincial "culture." Yes, you know a bit about art and architecture. You go to concerts. You even enjoy them in a stiff and limited way. But talk to you about Bovaryism . . . and you would not know (you wouldn't know even if you'd read the book) what the term meant. It would be a reference to areas of thought where you are a stranger.
>
> If only there were someone alive in England to understand me! But there is only Orwell who might have done; and he is dead.

Not that the feminine sensibility is incapable of responsiveness to the right man: "What mask, what attitude must I put on—when my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

waist aches for its encirclement by that nervous, graceful, tweed-clad arm?";

> He is unripe and needs experience. A love affair with a married woman? Yes, probably. It would redden and mellow and sweeten that hard, young green fruit of his talent.

"And I," says the narrator, "—whatever my other faults—am not vulgar." Surprisingly enough, in the interstices of this ludicrous attitudinizing (provincial aspirations soured into nastiness), Miss Charles has some hard, shrewd things to say about upper-class British snobbery; and the playwright—a gentle, talkative, self-questioning Jew—eventually develops into a convincing and substantial figure.

Though John Cheever will have to plead guilty to the charge of being the most consistent producer of stories appearing in *The New Yorker,* it is probably unfair to accuse him of feminine sensibility. True, his very association with the magazine makes certain persons nervous: on the back of the jacket, Malcolm Cowley writes that *The Wapshot Scandal* "is completely outside the *New Yorker* pattern or any other; it's something unique in contemporary fiction. In fact, I think the whole book is marvelous . . ." Marvelous or not, it has the cocktail-party archness, the quaint surprises of circumstance, the tunnel-vision attention to routine details and sense-impressions, the quick-sketch going-away dabs at characterization, the tittering ham-handed irony all of which have immemorially identified *New Yorker* fiction:

> The thought of her overtook his feeling of loss, he straightened up in spite of his wet clothing. Oh, the wind and the rain and to hold in one's arms a willing love! He stepped into a large pile of dog manure.

The book reads—as most *New Yorker* fiction does—like *Our Town* spiked with dyspeptic wisecracks and nightmares about the 100-megaton bomb. So much fiction passes the bleared eyes of high-minded critics merely because it is (a) against nuclear war, (b) against mad scientists who wish to start one, (c) in favor of love and tenderness, (d) aware of their impossibility, (e) sad about youth, (f) sad about old age, (g) sad about middle age, (h) sad about things, but (i) primed to sprinkle whimsy over (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (h):

> It was the delivery man from the dry-cleaners. Coverly heard Betsey ask him in for a drink. "Oh, I'd love to, Mrs. Wapshot," the man said, "but I have to go home now and cook my supper. I'm living alone now. I guess I told you. My wife ran off with one of the butchers in the food express [of the missile site where Coverly Wapshot works]. The lawyer told me to put the kids in an orphanage, he said I'd get custody quicker that way, so I'm all alone. I'm so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> alone that I talk with the flies. There's a lot of flies where I live but I don't kill them. I just talk with them. They're like friends. 'Hello, flies,' I say. 'We're alone, you and me. You're looking good, flies.' I suppose you might think I was crazy for talking with the flies but that's the way it is. I don't have anybody else to talk to."

It is this sort of literary self-abuse—quite characteristic of the book—that Glenway Wescott (who should know better) recommends to the public when he calls *The Wapshot Scandal* "a delectable and in a way glorious piece of fiction."

To be sure, there are other, less tortuous ways of writing bad fiction. "This woman was a sleeping volcano, radically different from other women he had known": so muses the hero of *The Stone Face* about the beautiful Polish girl he has just met. He is an American Negro painter ("Simeon was not satisfied with his painting: technically it was not bad, but there was no inner drive or inspiration") who has come to Paris to escape—well, we can fill in the rest, and what he is escaping is abominable, and the novel is as grim, honest, and incompetent as an undergraduate paper on the race problem.

Fred Hoyle is a distinguished English astronomer, Geoffrey Hoyle is his son; and between them they seem to have discovered a still less, perhaps the least, tortuous way of writing bad fiction. The way is to write sheer imbecility. The latest imbecility is science fiction: if you aren't interested in ideas, emotions, or people, what about the rigors of space travel and the strange kind of life on the planet Achilles? *Fifth Planet* is sophisticated stuff, however, from the opening lines:

> Hugh Conway shifted uneasily. An hour before his wife had come to him with such fervour that he knew she must have been unfaithful again.

How about some fresh insights in exciting prose? "There was something terrifyingly anonymous about a really big city"; " 'We must get the most out of every single minute, darling' "; "He began to understand the relationship between mind and matter and their expression in terms of mathematical physics"; "Cathy's face was alive with emotion." If you remain unimpressed, observe how the hoariest clichés of novelistic stage-business persist into the twenty-first century:

> "Say ten down and ten up, with the necessary safety factor about thirty kilometres a second under high-thrust conditions. How much under low-thrust?" asked Lamos.
>
> "About two hundred," growled Cadogan, as he bit into his sandwich. "Not a very nice prospect, is it?"

The authors—these two grown men—conclude their description of the space ship by remarking that "it seemed almost impossibly compli-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cated." No doubt the aficionados will rush in to insist that not *all* science-fiction is like this.

Back in the twentieth century, Alan Sillitoe can still show a pushy, noisy interest in man alive. The class war continues to carry a strong charge for Englishmen, especially proletarian Englishmen; and Sillitoe tends to authenticate his characters' purity of soul by having them mouth the slogans of pacifism, downtrodden workers, red revolution. But he also knows what makes them go when they aren't serving his political purposes. "The Magic Box" is a fine Lawrencian story (Lawrence remains the magnetic exemplar for British writers of short stories) about a working-class marriage, which is apparently shattered by the husband's nervous breakdown after the son's death, and ultimately renovated by the wife's adulterous merry-making while he is away:

> She stiffened, looked at him with hatred: "It's as much your fault as mine."
>
> "I'm leaving," he said, "I'm off."
>
> "Go on, then." Her face turned, the tone mechanical and meant, the quiet resignation of it a hot poker burning through his eyes. It was a final torment he could not take. Dazed by the grief of her decision she didn't see his hand coming. A huge blow, like a boulder flying at top speed in a gale, hit the side of her face, threw her back, feet collapsing. Another fist caught her, and another. She crashed on to the bed, a cry of shock beating her to it there. As she was to tell her mother: "He hadn't hit me before then, and he wain't hit me again, either. Maybe I deserved it, though."
>
> He tore the message [his note of farewell] off and screwed it tight, flung it to the far corner of the room. Then he went to Nan and tried to comfort her, the iron hooves of desperate love trampling them back into the proportions of matrimonial life.

"To Be Collected" is a wonderful, cantankerous, full-blooded yarn that owes nothing to anybody else (though Sillitoe, who is a boy from the Midlands too, savors its dialect as Lawrence did), about three brothers whose business is collecting junk. None of the brothers is very bright: the oldest cautious, the youngest green and angry, the other an exuberant optimist and not quite reliable in the head—all of them with their spirits a bit dashed, out on business in their old truck in pouring rain:

> "We might strike lucky at Eastwood, with an old copper or a mangle. Or an old firegrate. A few stone o' woollens. You never know."
>
> "All we'll get," Bert prophesied, "is a couple of bugged-up bedticks that a consumptive man and wife have just pegged out on. We'll be lucky to get eighteen pence the two: a cup of tea and a bun each."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They come upon an old canvas kitbag that happens to be, of all things for these three military-hating, police-dodging proletarian anarchists, a cache of machine-guns. Dave, the cautious, persuades Bert, the youngest, that the guns must be abandoned rather than, say, sold to the IRA; and, as they begin to fling them away into a reservoir, Donnie, recollecting the clotted resentments of his ordered-about life, turns on his brothers with one of the guns loaded and aimed for as bad a few minutes as they have had:

> Donnie grinned. "You thought I meant it, didn't you? Well I do. But if you think I'm going to do it when you expect it though, you're both bleddy-well wrong." Bert's senses were fixed hard between guile and humour, and he said with a smile: "Drop that rod, and I'll strip stark naked and swim in to get them guns out, one at a time—then we'll flog 'em to the IRA. Eh? What do you think o' that, then?"
>
> It made no impression against Donnie's maniacal stare. Without warning, his arms lifted for the aim.
>
> Bert fell to the ground, flattened like a spread-out frog. Dave followed, keeling over like a post, low-current electricity of fear moving like a threat through his limbs. Donnie's arms spun like propellers working in competition, and after several illogical movements both gun and magazine somehow parted and leapt free of his swinging arms, falling into the water. On lifting their heads—a broad margin of some seconds after the splash—they saw Donnie widely grinning.
>
> "Oh you should a seen yer! Christ, you should a seen yer! Frightened to death, the pair of you. What a treat! Never in all my born days . . ."
>
> They ran at him, wild for vengeance, and before they reached him Donnie knew it was no use making out it had been a joke. Gaiety withered on his face.
>
> "You swine," Dave screamed, gripping his waist and dragging him down. He had wanted to smash Donnie's life out, had promised himself the marvellous vicious treat of it while petrified by the Sten in such crazy hands—but a relatively harmless grip was all he could give now that the time had come. Bert found Donnie's head from out of the scuffle, and thumped him between the eyes in a businesslike way, hard. "You cranky bastard, doing a thing like that."

On the other side of the class war stands Anthony Powell, who has been quietly assembling an Anglo-American cult with the six books that now constitute the two thick volumes of *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Since the plan of this "novel" is indefinitely expansible while its protagonist (and author) remains at the ready to pry with pathologically unflagging tidiness into the tepid lives of two or three dozen upper-class English families, it may yet turn out to be the longest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

novel ever written (it is already about as long as *War and Peace*).

Powell's early novels resemble those of his friend, Evelyn Waugh, without Waugh's comic inventiveness or frivolously sadistic twists of plot. They have the standard Oxbridge anti-American and anti-Semitic revulsions (from *Afternoon Men*: "He was dark and had bags under the eyes and rather a thick nose, but the general effect was not bad and he hardly looked like a Jew at all"); they tell about 'twentyish emancipation, silly parties at which drunks behave stupidly, ambitious young men on the make for the daughters of fox-hunting families, all with an air of slightness and couldn't-care-less. *From a View to a Death,* published over thirty years ago, has an amusing post-Dickensian eccentric of a Major, whose hobby, one might say, is transvestism; but not much else except that air of contrived insouciance.

Now the subject-matter of *A Dance to the Music of Time* is no more serious; only, Powell seems to assume that if you do the same slight material over and over again, left and right, backward and forward, upstairs and down, you will achieve weight and substance: an apotheosis, no doubt, of the frightfully literate mysteries of English social twaddle, which carries snobbery to unexampled heights of tedium. His devotees will argue that what counts is Powell's intelligence, which they say plays over these pointless lives with Chaucerian (or Proustian) irony and compassion. One trick of his intelligence is to devise an action in which otherwise unassociated characters keep stumbling over one another in the most remote circumstances, so that somebody's unexpected reappearance may be said, complacently, to help "prove somehow rather consolingly, that life continued its mysterious, patterned way": not even Hardy's stacked deck of malign chance, but just a pretext for bringing the same people together again for another bout of gossip, reminiscence, news—"a little grayer," "scarcely changed," "a little fuller," and as damned dull as ever. His intelligence doesn't boggle, either, at frequent doses of that cheapest rhetorical pretense of subtlety, the adverbial mystifier: "curiously overpowering," "curiously unrelenting," "curiously harsh," "in an obscure way depressing," "I was for some reason reminded," "oddly interesting." Nor at bogus insights about life, death, marriage, money, men, women, and children.

Powell's method of getting on with the story must be the most ponderously inefficient of all time. To begin with, each character is introduced as he first appears to the narrator, who immediately speculates for three or four pages on the probable nature of a character who is blond, has small ears, and wears a black overcoat. The overcoat then says a few desultory words, whereupon the narrator takes several pages of pains to modify his original opinion in the light of this additional evidence. Whenever the overcoat turns up later in the same book, the narrator cleverly seizes on new bits of evidence which,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again, satisfy or disappoint or modify, but in any case are incorporated into, his bulky expectations. The procedure lapses into real lunacy in all the books after the first, since each character described in Book I is recapitulated in virtually the same terms and at the same length in Books II, III and so on, before new desultory information is produced and incorporated: this spreading tumor of speculation being intended, one supposes, to serve for as true an image of the character as the mind of man affords. It need hardly be noted that there is astonishingly little dialogue—how could there be? Powell is too busy reminding us who Lady Warminster or Erridge or Quiggin is, to let them have a go at defining themselves by speaking out, even if he could think of something interesting for them to say. Powell is suffering from an elephantiasis of the will, making immense harrumphing preparations for something that never happens: "a pedestal without a statue," as Tchaikovsky remarked of some of Brahms's music.[2]

One of the six books breaks free enough of the straitjacket of Powell's procedure to present genuine events, crises, even lively dialogue: *The Acceptance World* opens with Uncle Giles, Powell's meanest and most vivid eccentric, at the top of his form; introduces Giles's friend, the ominously placid prophetess, Mrs. Erdleigh; moves through a séance at which the voice of Karl Marx speaks, rather querulously; warmly memorializes the narrator's hopeless affair with a girl he can't begin to try to understand. But Books I, II, IV, and V are maddening catalogs of trivia, and Book VI is a symbolified piece of solemn quackery about England on the eve of both wars. Even though Arthur Mizener seems to disagree,[3] Powell is not the greatest living novelist.

What Powell characteristically exhibits is not, after all, intelligence, but a class sensibility, a predisposition to freeze into drawing-room postures the small world of admissible phenomena; not Sillitoe's or Mrs. Lessing's unintimidated social intelligence, the candid unwelcome stare of recognition. Nor the aphoristic intelligence of satire and allegory.

[2] The honorific musical analogy for his novel, which Powell solicits and which his admirers are only too happy to affirm, will not work. The periodic repetition of a statement or description in a novel is not analogous, not indeed comparable, to the periodic repetition of a theme in a piece of music. (Even the use of a refrain in verse presupposes, or suggests, a musical setting: the possibility of song validates the recurrence of the words.) Prose statement functions in a nexus of facts, premises, conclusions, principles: a nexus in which repetition appears as a blocking, a kind of mental stuttering or incapacity.

[3] "The effect of *The Music of Time* is a very remarkable one for the mid-twentieth century. It is as if we had come suddenly on an enormously intelligent but completely undogmatic mind with a vision of experience that is deeply penetrating and yet wholly recognizable, beautifully subtle in ordination and yet quite unostentatious in technique, and in every respect undistorted by doctrine." Arthur Mizener, *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel,* Houghton Mifflin, 1964, p. 102.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Elephant is a phenomenon of The Thaw, and sometimes limited by a kind of parochialism: nose-thumbing at a particular tyranny, rather than minefields set to blow up any easy acquiescence. Even so, it is often very funny:

> In nineteen fifty-two during a solemn, commemorative meeting our colleague Pyz, who is stone deaf, shouted in good faith, "God save our Tsar Nicolai." Glus immediately drew certain conclusions from this incident.

The some comic turn can be used for non-political purposes:

> The first time I saw her she was in the company of a Colonel, who came near to her and twirled his moustache with one hand while inserting the other hand deep into her blouse. . . . The idea that his behaviour could have an erotic significance never even crossed my mind until I heard him say to her: "Well, my pet?"
>
> Ah, I thought, she is not so unapproachable as I had imagined.

Mrozek writes very brief parables, some of them squibs of partisan satire, all of them glittering with a dryly attentive wit. In "The Swan," an over-solicitous guard takes such good care of his swan that both are "dismissed by the authorities" for drunkenness and dereliction of duty. A woman confesses to the priest that her husband is made of plasticine: "'An annulment of the marriage? But, Father, that's impossible—we have children!'" Here are some "Golden Thoughts": "Snow: powdered water"; "Man thinks this and that, but more often this"; "A lover's disappointment: when a necrophil finds that his partner is only in a coma." A village is plagued by supernatural visitations:

> My cabin stands on the edge of the forest, alone. The night is black, the forest is black and my thoughts are like ravens. One day my neighbour, Jusienga, was sitting on a tree stump by the forest, reading *Horizons of Technology*, when something got at him from the back so that for three days he never stopped staring vacantly.
>
> We need your advice, comrades, because we are alone here, miles from anywhere, surrounded only by distance and graves.

Tommaso Landolfi has a similar wit and parabolical talent, but his temperament is more austere, his intelligence metaphysical and architectonic rather than political. His parables can metamorphose into long stories, richly circumstantial and eventful, that nevertheless retain the categorical girders and tensions of parable.

Landolfi has translated most of the great Russians; and "Gogol's Wife" is an uncanny simulation of a Gogol story, sardonic fantasy related in a now-it-can-be-told manner by a pedantic fool who knows that any facts about genius are owed to the world. The story is, in effect, written through the Gogolian fatuous narrator by the early

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gogol about the late Gogol, sinking into fanaticism and madness. Gogol—now it can be told—did have a wife, and she was constructed very cunningly of rubber. She could be inflated (through the anus) into whatever shape or size, and altered by whatever cosmetic and pileous applications, happened at the moment to suit the great man. Unfortunately, since despite all his love and precautions she began to develop the vices of women, he was driven to destroy her:

> ". . . Unhappy Caracas, most pitiable of God's creatures! But die she must!"
>
> Caracas was swelling up. Nikolai Vassilevitch sweated, wept and pumped. I wished to stop him but, I know not why, I had not the courage. She began to become deformed and shortly assumed the most monstrous aspect; and yet she had not given any signs of alarm—she was used to these jokes. But when she began to feel unbearably full, or perhaps when Nikolai Vassilevitch's intentions became plain to her, she took on an expression of bestial amazement, even a little beseeching, but still without losing that dreadful look. . . .
>
> . . . Her ribs flared wide apart and were no longer attached to the sternum, and she resembled a python digesting a donkey. A donkey, did I say? An ox! An elephant! At this point I believed her already dead, but Nikolai Vassilevitch, sweating, weeping and repeating: "My dearest! My beloved! My best!" continued to pump.
>
> She went off unexpectedly and, as it were, all of a piece. . . .

"Wedding Night" displaces the terrors of a new bride into her mesmerized scrutiny of the activities of a chimney sweep ("That bestial howl of agony soon proved to be a kind of joyous call: the man had burst through onto the roof. The muffled rubbings resumed more rapidly now; finally a black foot came down out of the slit searching for support— the foot of a hanged man. . . ."); "Giovanni and His Wife" describes the connubial happiness of a couple each of whom sings continuously and variously out of tune, and in precisely the same fashion as the other. So much for love and marriage.

"Dialogue on the Greater Harmonies" poses the sad case of a man who, having learned a language he supposes to be Persian, writes three poems in it, only to to discover that the language is neither Persian nor any other known to anybody in the world except himself. Are the poems beautiful? Who is to judge? What is the relation between sound and meaning? Is translation possible? The dialogue of poet, friend, and eminent critic spirals upward into a thin and cackling empyrean of intellectual comedy. "The Death of the King of France" is the most enigmatic and Kafkaesque of the pieces, about a clerk with daydreams of glory, who raises a female child for his own eventual use: its climax is a hair-raising passage of hallucination that accompanies the girl's first experience of menstruation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The longest story of the collection is "The Two Old Maids." It concerns the title characters and their pet monkey—a gift from their now dead brother—who proves to have been defiling the altar in the chapel of a neighboring convent. After a trial, in which one priest represents the prosecution and another the defense, the monkey is condemned to death and executed by one of the old maids:

> It was necessary to repeat the blow once, twice, three times. A tomb-like silence had fallen; which was torn by Lilla's hysterical scream, a sentence howled out precipitously, almost a single word: "We're killing our brother!"

The events march forward in a bright glare of articulate hatred: the author's anticlericalism, his hatred of the epicene fustiness of religious institutions, his hatred of corrupt old age and vindictive self-denial; a hatred like Blake's that clears the air. The one flaw in the story is that the young priest sounds rather improbably like an irreligious humanist of the order of Camus. Still, it is a superb story, an act of contumacious intelligence.

Landolfi, Mrozek, Sillitoe, Mrs. Lessing see no reason why we should be humored or indulged; why we should be spared such acts of allegorical and social intelligence as the best fiction, whichever its emphasis, always is; why we should be permitted to turn away—as we are so well trained to do—from man alive.

Notes on Contributors *(cont.)*

JOHN HOLLOWAY, the British poet and critic, recently spent a a year in Greece as Byron Professor of English at the University of Athens. "The Lion Hunt" is a selection from his book of the same title that will be published this May by Archon Books.

JOHN HAINES is a native Virginian who has made his home near Fairbanks, Alaska, since 1947 and has been writing poetry for the past twelve years. This is his first publication in THE HUDSON REVIEW.

MAXINE W. KUMIN, author of *Halfway*, has recently spent two years at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study.

The poems in this issue by DILYS LAING were found among a large number of unpublished writings which she left at the time of her death in 1960. Mrs. Laing was the author of several books, and had published her earlier work in numerous magazines.

DOROTHY ROBERTS lives in State College, Pa. She is the author of *Twice to Flame*, a volume of poems.

MARVIN COHEN is a young writer who lives in New York City. He has at least two novels completed or in progress.

KENNETH BURKE'S article in this issue was written in connection with a seminar he recently gave at Pennsylvania State University.

RICHARD FOSTER, an Associate Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, is at work on a critical study of Scott Fitzgerald.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS' *Surface and Symbol*, a book on Joyce's *Ulysses*, was recently awarded the Explicator Prize as the best book of literary explication published in 1962.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARIUS BEWLEY

Romanticism Reconsidered[1]

FOR SOME YEARS a practical revaluation of English Romanticism has been quietly under way in a number of books and critical articles on various aspects of the period and on individual poets. This revision of critical attitudes that were prevalent thirty years ago when the Romantics were under attack by some of the best critics of the time is less directed at the "anti-Romanticism" of that period, which served a highly useful function even for the Romantics themselves, than it aims to establish new perspectives beyond Victorian misinterpretations and distortions by which Romantic poetry may be profitably approached again. That this renewed interest in Romanticism has never crystallized into anything that might be called a "revival" is not to be regretted; at the same time one has missed any critical essays on the period that might formulate in lucid and defining terms, and from a centrality of view, our changing estimate of the poetry. Few if any books or essays have appeared intent on redefining the relation of the twentieth century to Romanticism with that sense of contemporary relevance, and with the critical urbanity necessary to constitute a "classic" formulation for the present phase of Romantic studies in the way that, some thirty years ago, Leavis' *Revaluation* and Eliot's *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* did for an earlier phase.

Perhaps *Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute,* edited by Northrop Frye, has some of the qualities I am thinking of. It would be difficult to suggest a better way in which to begin a reassessment of the Romantics than with the four essays by Frye, Abrams, Trilling, and Wellek that compose this small volume. As opposed to such secondary and comparatively meaningless characteristics of Romanticism as Wonder, Gothicism, feeling for nature, etc., the essays in this book concern themselves with fundamental questions: What is the essential meaning of Romanticism? What radical differences in imagery might one expect to find in a comparison between Romantic and pre-Romantic poetry? What is the vision of man that one finds centrally present in Romantic poetry? Exactly where do we and our contemporary literature stand in relation to the Romantics?

1 ROMANTICISM RECONSIDERED: SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE ENGLISH INSTITUTE, edited by *Northrop Frye.* Columbia University Press. $3.75. THE ROMANTIC VENTRILOQUISTS: WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, KEATS, SHELLEY, BYRON, by *Edward E. Bostettor.* University of Washington Press. $6.75. ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1815-1832, by *Ian Jack,* being Vol. X of the Oxford History of English Literature. Oxford at the Clarendon Press. $11.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The answers to these questions proceed naturally from the definition of Romanticism that Mr. René Wellek offers. His essay, the last in the book, might more appropriately have led off. From the nature of his subject the essay is less intrinsically interesting than the others, but it provides a valuable cornerstone for the argument of the book as a whole. Many years ago in his famous essay "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms" Arthur O. Lovejoy tried to disintegrate the term into nullity by tabulating the contradictory meanings of it that had proliferated for generations. Mr. Wellek more than counteracts that early essay by a tabulation of more recent conclusions drawn by English, American, French, and particularly German scholars who have worked with the concept of Romanticism. He finds that "in recent decades a stabilization of opinion has been achieved," and he concludes with a descriptive statement of the nature of Romanticism from which a study of any of the major English Romantics, with the exception of Byron, might well begin:

> One could even say . . . that progress has been made not only in defining the common features of Romanticism but in bringing out what is its peculiarity or even its essence and nature: that attempt, apparently doomed to failure and abandoned by our time, to identify subject and object, to reconcile man and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness by poetry which is "the first and last knowledge."

The desire to merge oneself with what is greater than oneself—to take one's place in a divine or transcendental continuum of some kind—is indeed the central fact for most of the Romantics. Keats desired to lose himself in a "fellowship with essence," and his whole conception of negative capability is in fact a kind of retreat from sharply focused identity. Blake wanted to drain "the sea of time and space" off man's mind, leaving him starkly confronted with his own divinity in a universe from which the illusion of matter would evaporate in a blinding flash of imaginative light; and even Wordsworth, the most comfortably settled in a physical universe of any of them, wrote

> . . . and how exquisitely, too—
> Theme this but little heard of among men—
> The external World is fitted to the Mind;
> And the creation (by no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish. . . .

Even so, he hardly went far enough to please Coleridge, who came to want a universe wholly created by the act of perceiving it (perhaps because of his feeling of psychological insecurity in the physical world).

This desire to identify subject and object is discussed more concretely in Mr. Frye's opening essay in which he writes: "The sense

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of identity with a larger power of creative energy meets us everywhere in Romantic culture. . . ." This sense of identification can only be an interior sense, a consciousness focused centrally in oneself. Beginning with this fact Mr. Frye propounds a fundamental opposition between pre-Romantic and Romantic imagery. Historically speaking, the former —that is, the imagery of medieval and Renaissance poetry—has followed the traditional Christian framework that divides creation into Heaven, Eden, physical nature, and Hell. "Such a framework of images," Mr. Frye writes, "however closely related in practice to belief, is not in itself a belief or an expression of belief: it is in itself simply a way of arranging images and providing for metaphors. At the same time the word 'framework' itself is a spatial metaphor, and any framework is likely to be projected in space, even confused or identified with its spatial projection." This "spatializing" of images, together with the fact that such prototypic models for man's creative activity as the City of God and the Garden of Eden are conceived as existing *outside* himself, externalized pre-Romantic imagery, grounding it firmly in an objective and extramental world. But Romantic imagery tends inwards and downwards. As the Romantic universe expands from rather than converges on the individual, the poet discovers in his own mind the models for his creative activity: "Hence in Romantic poetry the emphasis is not on what we have called sense, but on the constructive power of the mind, where reality is brought into being by experience." It is obvious that this *inwardness* and *downwardness* of Romanticism as opposed to the upwardness and outwardness of the opposing view would affect the quality of poetic imagery, and we do indeed have a Romantic poetry filled with caves, fountains, underground caverns, ocean floors and grottos, volcanoes, whirlpools, and so on: an imagery that naturally and spontaneously seeks the new center of gravity in the Romantic consciousness.

The apocalyptic vision of man's future that opened out from the French Revolution for the earlier English Romantic poets is emotionally almost incomprehensible to the generations that have followed the 1914 War, which was virtually an inversion of the fantastic millenarian hopes that burned so brightly up to the Terror, and even beyond. The vision Blake gives us at the end of his *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794) of Orc, his revolutionary Messiah, ready to purge "the vineyards of red France" and all mankind with his cleansing flames, may well leave hearts untouched that have since responded to Wilfred Owen's vision of what was to be hoped from the later war:

> Behold,
> A ram caught in a thicket by its horns;
> Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
> But the old man would not so, but slew his son—
> And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But if the state of intellectual and spiritual exaltation the Revolution induced in the English Romantics is strange to us, it is a central fact that has to be taken into account. Reading the earlier Romantics, one often gets the sense that the Revolution was merely an external symbol for an overwhelming internal reality—an explosion of soul at the very center of the Romantic self. Rarely have visible and objective events been so closely coordinated symbolically with spiritual impulsions and desires. In treating the relation between the Romantics and the Revolution Mr. M. H. Abrams has written an essay that emphasizes the marriage in desire and hope between the Romantics and the Revolution. In a memorable passage on Wordsworth he says: ". . . Wordsworth evokes from the unbounded and hence impossible hopes in the French Revolution a central Romantic doctrine; one which reverses the cardinal neo-classic ideal of setting only accessible goals, by converting what had been man's tragic error—the inordinancy of his "pride" that persists in setting infinite aims for finite man—into his specific glory and his triumph. Wordsworth shares the recognition of his fellow-Romantics, German and English, of the greatness of man's infinite *Sehnsucht,* his saving instability, Blake's 'I want! I want!' Shelley's 'the desire of the moth for the star.' "

The twentieth century is still well within the Romantic phase. Perhaps (to cite a case) no poet has ever been more deeply Romantic than Wallace Stevens. The woman singing beside the sea in his "The Idea of Order at Key West" who became through her song "the single artificer of the world / In which she sang," might be taken as the ideal example of the Romantic creator fashioning his own universe out of his mind and vision. Nevertheless, one often remarks a genuine embarrassment on the part of students newly exposed to Romantic poetry: there is something about it that seems a little alien to the contemporary reader. To understand the Romantics one should understand the meaning and measure of this distance between them and us, and in one of his most original essays Mr. Trilling attempts to discover the answer.

It is not possible to do more than faintly suggest his rather complex argument here. It begins with the recognition of the dignity and importance of pleasure's role in the Romantic faith. Fixing his attention on Keats, and especially Wordsworth, he writes: "For Wordsworth . . . pleasure was the defining attribute of life itself and of nature itself." But this temper has radically changed since Wordsworth, and: "There is no psychic fact more available to our modern comprehension than that there are human impulses which . . . repudiate pleasure and seek gratification in—to use Freud's word—unpleasure." This new temper of soul is represented by a numerous tribe of literary figures of which Mr. Trilling takes the disagreeable clerk in Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* as prototype and father. In a passage heavily abridged here he goes on to say that this wretched hero "has arranged his own misery—arranged it in the interests of his dignity,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which is to say, of his freedom. For to want what is commonly thought to be appropriate to men, to want whatever . . . is believed to yield pleasure . . . is to admit and consent to the *conditioned* nature of man. What a distance we have come in the six decades since Wordsworth wrote his Preface!"

It appears to me that this volume of four essays provides an eminently profitable introduction to English Romanticism. The essays are not peripheral but central to the subject, offering original and often brilliantly stimulating insights. *The Romantic Ventriloquists* by Mr. Edward E. Bostettor might also be considered a kind of introduction, albeit a more elaborate one. It consists of five extended essays on the poetry of the major poets, with the exception of Blake. The exception is unfortunate, and is not really covered by his note: ". . . I am concerned with the development of a literary tradition, and the formulation of critical attitudes, and Blake had almost no influence on literary or critical attitudes." No doubt: but the existence in Blake's poetry in extreme form and at the very beginning of the period, of such centrally characteristic tenets of Romanticism as Mr. Wellek noted would suggest that a larger view of what constitutes tradition might be in order. In the passage cited from his essay, Mr. Wellek found that the central experience of Romanticism was an attempt "to identify subject and object, to reconcile man and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness by poetry which is 'the first and last knowledge.' " Without proposing a moral judgment on this Romantic program Mr. Wellek merely remarked that it was "apparently doomed to failure and abandoned by our time."

Mr. Bostettor begins his study from a similar idea of what Romanticism is, but as he proceeds the enquiry focuses narrowly on the philosophical inadequacy of the Romantic aspiration, and a moral judgment is implicit from the first. In this passage he gives us his description of the essential Romantic, and, incidentally, in doing so he explains his title:

> Among the Romantic poets one of the favorite analogies for the poetic imagination was the ventriloquistic image of the aeolian harp. As Coleridge's use of the image vividly demonstrates, it was difficult for the poet to distinguish the imagination as the passive instrument upon which the "intellectual breeze" played from the imagination as creative source of its own music. Thus was engendered an immense egoism in which the poet assumed that the center of reality was within himself: the universe existed as he imagined it. Where in the traditional syntax an objective universe focused upon man as the center of creation, in the new syntax the universe expanded outward from the human imagination. The poet became in reality the divine ventriloquist projecting his own voice as the voice of ultimate truth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We quickly learn that Romantic poetry exhibits a "gradual loss of vitality and confidence," and "affirmation hardening into incantatory rhetoric sharply at odds with the perceptions and experiences it conveys. The history of Romantic poetry becomes in part the history of a syntax that proved inadequate to the demands placed upon it." As a critical strategy for dealing with Shelley, whose limitations along these lines are obvious and clear, or for dealing with the later satiric poetry of Byron, in which the limitations of the "Romantic syntax" do not even exist, Mr. Bostettor's approach could scarcely be improved. It should be said at once that the chapters on Shelley and Byron are excellent. Byron might be called the hero of the book, if indeed—coming as he does at the very end—*deus ex machina* wouldn't be the better term. Mr. Bostettor sees him as the god who might have redeemed the Romantics: "In *Don Juan,* Byron had found a way out of the impasse in which his contemporaries were trapped. . . . It is not too much to say that he had shown a way by which poetry could survive and grow in the nineteenth century as a meaningful social art."

Perhaps it is that siren phrase, "meaningful social art," that seduces Mr. Bostettor into a superstitious overvaluation of what he repeatedly calls the "Romantic syntax." It is easy to exaggerate the importance of any given "syntax" of belief for the poets who wrote under its influence, especially if one has a thesis to drive home about it. One would scarcely feel a sense of irremediable loss had Pope declined to spell out the "syntax" of the Great Chain of Being in his *Essay on Man.* The Godwinism of Shelley's *Queen Mab* seems no more incredible, and considerably less repulsive, than the contingent doctrine of the best of all possible worlds that Pope arrives at in his great salute to the *status quo:*

> All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good:
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

This "Augustan syntax" seems to me much less favourable to the achievement of major poetry than the "Romantic syntax" which is the Medusa Head Mr. Bostettor sees as petrifying all promising Romantic talents. But who would have guessed, reading *The Essay on Man* in 1733, that in less than a decade Pope would prove so free of the "Augustan syntax" that he would end his masterpiece, Book IV of *The Dunciad,* with these lines in which he took another look at this best of all possible worlds?

> *Religion* blushing veils her sacred fires,
> And unawares *Morality* expires.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> And *public* flame, nor *private,* dares to shine;
> Nor *human* spark is left, nor glimpse *divine!*
> Lo! thy dread empire, CHAOS! is restored;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word;
> They hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
> And universal darkness buries All.

No real and considerable poet is caged in a "syntax," or at least he need not be, and it is the chief fault of Mr. Bostettor's book that he supposes Keats and Wordsworth were so. He makes out a cunning case about Keats that, although it sounds plausible, does not carry conviction, and strikes me as being ungenerous. Keats's last great unfinished poem, "The Fall of Hyperion," is open to ingenious interpretations, but skillfully as Mr. Bostettor has deployed his arguments it does not seem to me the ultimate booby trap that would have destroyed Keats as a poet had he lived. It is a bold exploration of creative motives and of the springs of human action, but only within a framework as mischievously and "philosophically" conceived as Mr. Bostettor's can it appear to present a fatal dilemma to the artist.

Mr. Bostettor comes off much better with Coleridge. He is good on "Kubla Khan," and his account of how Coleridge's psychological involvement in "Christabel" prevented him from ever finishing the poem is persuasive. But the chapter on Wordsworth offers special difficulties. Mr. Bostettor is not alone in believing that some time around 1802 (most critics would place it a little later) Wordsworth lost his belief in the sustaining power of nature, which faith had been responsible for his best poetry. "It assumed the benevolence and 'geniality' of nature, and her maternal regard for man," Mr. Bostettor writes. "But this faith could not bear up under any close scrutiny or any changes of situation or mood." Somewhat paradoxically when one considers Mr. Bostettor's aversion to the "Romantic syntax," it was only when Wordsworth was victimized by it, when the young poet was able to see "into the life of things," saw "one life and felt that it was joy," that he was able to write great poetry. Of course Mr. Bostettor's point is that creative failure is inherent in the "Romantic syntax." But he wants it both ways. Wordsworth is condemned for writing from a point of view incapable of sustaining itself, and then he is condemned because he no longer draws sustenance from that point of view.

Particularly irritating is the attack on Wordsworth's attitude to the poor and aged. No fact is better established about Wordsworth than the sincerity and depth of his social concern. Mr. T. S. Eliot indeed once found that the originality of the *Lyrical Ballads* sprang from this fact. But Mr. Bostettor wishes to suggest that Wordsworth's interest in the poor was used merely as a crutch to his egotism: ". . . humanity is important as a remote stimulus to make him feel more intensely, but not to disturb or torment him. Similarly, in the *Old Cumberland*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beggar the old man becomes the means by which the good in people is brought out. His presence does not distress, but rather gives a sense of well-being." And a little later: ". . . there is still a curious insensitivity about the passages quoted. The beggar himself is not consulted or thought of as a man; he is looked at from the outside as an instrument. Wordsworth assumes that the beggar wants what the poet thinks he should want. . . . It is an illuminating example of selfish projection. . . . the question of why there should be beggary at all never comes up."

The discussion of the discharged soldier in Book IV of *The Prelude* is as bad—and it is a kind of badness one resents for Wordsworth's sake. These readings are touched by a social service piety that appears to me to misinterpret disastrously the imaginative mode in which the passages were written. One begins to wonder what Mr. Bostettor meant when he commended Byron's contribution to a "meaningful social art." No doubt his declared belief in the "immense egoism" of the Romantics helped to inspire these readings, but it serves to illustrate how dangerous a preconceived thesis and well polished axe can be even for as fine a critic as Mr. Bostettor shows himself on numerous occasions.

An inclusive review of the *Oxford History of English Literature* appeared in the last issue of this magazine. One of the chief points made was the "striking . . . degree of variation" among the volumes that have appeared so far. The range of variation has been extended by the publication of Volume X, *English Literature, 1815-1832* by Ian Jack. This volume appears to me unquestionably the best so far. By "best" here is meant the most usable, the most profitable to the student. Presumably it is, after all, towards the universities that the *Oxford History* looks for its audience. The virtues of the book are those of Mr. Jack's *Augustan Satire* that appeared in 1952: conciseness, an exceptional ability to organize complex and sprawling materials with clarity and logic, a trained sense of relevance, and excellent critical judgment. The treatment of the period is well proportioned between major and minor figures. The chapters on Byron, Shelley, and Keats provide a discriminating purview of critical attitudes towards these poets in recent years; but perhaps the best chapter of all is the one on Hazlitt, which is a masterpiece of critical exposition and analysis. The bibliography is excellent and should prove invaluable to the student working in the period. This is, on the whole, a volume that honours the series in which it appears.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHARD FOSTER

The Birth of Character: Scott Fitzgerald[1]

IN 1917 SCOTT FITZGERALD wrote to his mother of his appointment to a commission in the infantry, an event he celebrated by ordering some uniforms made at Brooks Brothers: "If you want to pray," he solemnly advised her, "pray for my soul and not that I won't get killed." Twenty years later, years in which easy triumph as a writer had turned to bitter failure, love and youth had fallen upon days of nightmare, madness, and exhaustion, he wrote many didactic letters to his daughter Scottie, letters studded with similar paste gems of eloquence and wisdom:

> One time in sophomore year at Princeton, Dean West got up and rolled out the great lines of Horace: "Integer Vitae . . . [etc.]"—And I knew in my heart that I had missed something by being a poor Latin scholar, like a blessed evening with a lovely girl.
>
> I am known as a left-wing sympathizer and would be proud if you were. . . . Some of those radical girls [at Vassar] may not look like much now but in your lifetime they are liable to be high in the councils of the nation.
>
> Remember when you're reading [Ecclesiastes] that it's one of the top pieces of writing in the world.
>
> Scottie, you've been as lucky as anybody could be in your generation to have had a two month's look at Europe just before the end and to have gotten in two years of college in times of peace before such matters are drowned in the roar of Stuka bombers. And you have seen the men's colleges as they may not be again in our time, with the games and the proms.

These musings of the incorrigible sophomore romantic in a badly battered man of forty—and there are plenty of such passages in Andrew Turnbull's edition of Fitzgerald's letters—will be further evidence to the skeptics that Fitzgerald was at best a glittering ephebe, a silly, misled, gifted boy who aged and disintegrated without ever really growing up. To those who see him always as the muse or figment of a crazy age these sentiments will seem quite in harmony with a life that lived its turmoil in a house called La Paix and its decline in a hotel called The

1 THE LETTERS OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, ed by *Andrew Turnbull*. Charles Scribner's Sons. $10.00. SCOTT FITZGERALD, by *Andrew Turnbull*. Charles Scribner's Sons. $5.95; paper (Scribner Library), $1.95. F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES, by *William Goldhurst*. World. $4.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Garden of Allah. Helen Hayes was his correspondent on the subjects of childrearing and governesses, after all. Shirley Temple was his luncheon companion, and Edward Everett Horton his landlord. And he knew the effects of having Miriam Hopkins stand too close as she talked to him. Francis Scott Key was his forebear, an Edward Fitzgerald was his father, and his lawyer's name was Edgar Allen Poe. Added up, he could have been an offspring of the bizarre and compassionate imagination of Nathanael West, a similarly tragicomic contemporary whose work he came to know in late life. But he was, in fact, the substance and subject of his own art, which is certainly the most subjective, the most personal, in all major twentieth century American fiction.

And considering the quality of his experience and the nature of his temperament perhaps it is near miraculous that he could become not only a major writer but also, in some instances, an unarguably great one. The data of that tawdry, chaotic, pathetic, and sometimes absurd life, its tumbling clownishly down a twenty year path of dissolution from dazzling heights of youthful achievement, fame, and wealth toward sickness, limping failure, and final anonymity, are richly present in biographer Turnbull's selection from the available letters. Turnbull's deftly expressive and now deservedly classic biography of Fitzgerald, while respectably scholarly (an example is his straightening out of the famous Edith Wharton anecdote as passed down through Arthur Mizener), is a valuable complement to Mizener's basic and elaborately factual biography because it is an expressive interpretation, a "portrait" —the kind of biography that is produced when fact is controlled by sensibility, as in F. W. Dupee's little book on Henry James and George Whicher's on Emily Dickinson, the kind of book that has not yet been written, surprisingly, on Joyce, Yeats, even Lawrence, and that we may hope will some day be written on Hemingway and Faulkner.

What emerges from Turnbull's biography, and what gathers in the letters as one reads them, is the sense not just of a personality, but of a complex moral reality that can be named with no other word than *character*. Both the biography and the letters tell, in their different ways, a mythic tale of the American wasteland. It is the story known so well, and told so variously by Henry James, the story of an empty, unformed American self, impelled forward by bright vague visions that dissolve into their opposites, and self-scourged by its own intense enthusiasms, miraculously filling up its emptiness with a quality of character that is not so much substance as it is light. "I am not a great man," Fitzgerald writes to Scottie near the end of his life, "but sometimes I think the impersonal and objective quality of my talent and the sacrifices of it, in pieces, to preserve its essential value has some sort of epic grandeur." The chief sign of the truth of Fitzgerald's statement about himself may lie in the persistence—a heroic persistence, perhaps, in view of the troubles of his last years—of his faith in his writer's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

calling and in the excellence, whatever the critical view of him had become, of the best work he had done. A few months before his death, in a letter to Max Perkins, he ponders the disparagements and desertions of old friends—Hemingway, John Peale Bishop, Harold Ober—and contemplates the bitter fact of his being out of print amid the popularity of such "melo" as *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Christ in Concrete*. He turns to schemes for reviving *Gatsby:*

> Would a popular reissue . . . with a preface *not* by me but by one of its admirers . . . make it a favorite with classrooms, profs, lovers of English prose—anybody? But to die, so completely and unjustly after having given so much! Even now there is little published in American fiction that doesn't bear my stamp—in a *small* way I was an original.

But soon the lamentation is over—

> I have not lost faith. People *will* buy my new book. . . . Where is Ernest and what doing? . . .

This spiritedness (Fitzgerald once wrote to Scottie, "I feel it is your duty to accept the sadness, the tragedy of the world we live in, with a certain *esprit*") was a real part of Fitzgerald's character. But so were the flaws of character that such spiritedness could sometimes transform or transcend. The streak of crude snobbery, for example, that could on occasion grow to the proportions of brutal prejudice. The impulses of petty cruelty, often indulged for the sake of "fun" at the expense of the vulnerable or weak. The compulsive rationalizing of failings in himself that were evident even to the simplest eye. The pretense to stock virtues that it did not matter if he failed to possess. And the continual faking of knowledge—about literature, history, politics, and all the other "serious" things—that he so obviously did not have. This last flaw, which makes so delightful, often, his innocently Chesterfieldian letters to Scottie ("I'm against schoolmarms," he writes with sweet myopia to Mrs. Bayard Turnbull, "though there's just the ghost of one in me"), in a way explains all the others.

Surely Fitzgerald was one of the most thoroughly ignorant men of literary genius who ever lived. If he could be snobbish and prejudiced, if he could be cruel, if he was at times an egregious fake, he was all this more out of ignorance than because he was cynically ambitious or inherently mean-spirited. Ignorance seems somehow to be the ground of his virtues, too, which, like his flaws, seem to spring from a native innocence. Though he never lost faith in his calling as a writer, his faith was a very simple and unsophisticated one conditioned by a genuine humility (". . . . in a *small* way I was an original"). In fact, it could be justly said that in a certain sense—the world's, or criticism's, or literary history's sense—he never *really* knew how good he was. Fitzgerald's humility, in the letters, before Hemingway, Edmund Wil-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son, and John Peale Bishop, all three of whom seem to have nourished their troubled egos as men and artists on the prospect of his disintegration, is sometimes a painful thing to witness. Wilson tended to be stuffy and ungenerous with Fitzgerald, Bishop was pompous and often contemptuous, and Hemingway, who had an unsportsmanly bent for kicking the fallen when they were down, could be very cruel. Yet Fitzgerald always believed that Hemingway was the greater writer, that Wilson and Bishop had the better intelligences, and that all three had firmer characters than he. His respect for Wilson's wide knowledge and incisive judgment never flagged. He was a consistently warm and helpful critic in his generous attention to Bishop's slender talent as a writer. And when he had been worst wounded by his old friend and debtor Hemingway in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," his letter of hurt protest had room, characteristically, for another truth—"It's a fine story—one of your best. . . ."

We shall remember, I think, the last decade of Hemingway's career, in spite of *The Old Man and the Sea,* as characterized by insularity, arrogance, and frequent expressions of jealousy and raw bitterness. There is, of course, bitterness in the roughly equivalent years for Fitzgerald, who lost, and lost earlier in life, at least as much of love, life, fame, vitality, as Hemingway would later lose. But what is most remarkable about Fitzgerald's decline is the quieting and sweetening of temperament, the deepening of understanding, the complex human awakening that is marked in the fiction by "Babylon Revisited" and in the letters by Fitzgerald's memorable letter to Richard Knight, written a year later, in which he movingly declares his knowledge of the reality of what he and Zelda have lived through, and what, after her breakdown, they have become. And there are disarming new kindnesses in word and deed recorded in the later letters, kindnesses to the young and aspiring, but also to some who, like Fitzgerald, have suffered "emotional bankruptcy" and turned for help to the author of the "Crack-Up" essays. Perhaps none of the letters are more moving, in the context of all the rest, than the late affectionate ones he writes across the years to the changeless images of those he loved when his world was young—Dean Gauss, the Murphys, Zelda.

Humility, generosity, loyalty—"goodness" is the word Malcolm Cowley has used to describe his sense of the man in the letters—these are some of the virtues that grow out of the rich soil of Fitzgerald's disillusion and failure. And intelligence—not a virtue exactly, but an important power that must be accorded Fitzgerald, and that went a long way toward compensating for his very real ignorance—a delicate, intuitive intelligence about life and art whose enrichment, over the years, into understanding is recorded directly in these letters. And eloquence, finally, the gift of articulating his own touching humanity, and through that the humanity of others. "Mother and I," he writes to his sister after his mother's death in 1936,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never had anything in common except a relentless stubborn quality, but when I saw all this it turned me inside out realizing how unhappy her temperament made her and how she clung, to the end, to all things that would remind her of moments of snatched happiness. So I couldn't bear to throw out anything. . . .

And only a few weeks before his own death in 1940 he begins a letter to Zelda—

Dearest Zelda: Autumn comes—I am forty-four—nothing changes. . . .

The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, as the record of the slow and painful birth of a man's character, is a very moving book. It is also a very important book in that it validates the inner truth of Fitzgerald's best stories and novels. But, alas, like Harry T. Moore's recent edition of D. H. Lawrence's letters, it is a very unsatisfactorily edited book. For one thing, the book is unconventionally, and very disastrously, organized. Other reviewers have commented on how confusing the method is, how almost impossible a sustained grasp on the continuity of an author's life is when one has to retrace it thirteen times through thirteen separate groupings of letters. The index, furthermore, is very inadequate as a tool of cross-referencing, as a casual spot-check will likely demonstrate. If you want to track down Fitzgerald's knowledge of Kafka, for example, the index will shortchange you by omitting what is perhaps the most important of three epistolary references to him—a letter of 1939 in which Fitzgerald thanks Edmund Wilson for having introduced him to Kafka's work. A number of names are blacked out in the letters, furthermore, as they sometimes have to be in collections of this kind. But what compounds the annoyance is that Turnbull's justification of sparing offense to "the living" is less than wholly ingenuous. A good many of the living—Joan Crawford, for example—are callously allowed to appear in unflattering context. The majority of those chosen for the charity of anonymity seem to be either graduates of Princeton and other good Eastern schools or functionaries of the house of Scribner. Once in a while the blacked-out name will be accompanied by some sort of clarifying footnote, but most of the time the reader is left to flounder in total darkness.

Which leads me to the worst of the several editorial shortcomings of this book—its serious lack of annotation, a shortcoming redeemed only in the section of letters to Edmund Wilson, and then only because Turnbull reprints, with only a few changes, Wilson's rather thorough notes from *The Crack-Up.* Certainly a nonspecialist reader could use a note or two reminding him that "Archie" is Archibald MacLeish, or that *Some Do Not,* about which Fitzgerald makes a very witty critical comment, is the first volume of Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* tetralogy. And what was the "Basil Rathbone story" that "leaked out" to Fitzgerald's great delight? Who is the "Mr. Maurice" (the poor soul even appears in the index this way!) to whom Fitzgerald

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wrote a letter of apology about a tardy review of Sherwood Anderson? Was the review ever published? If so, where? A nearby letter to Anderson suggests it may have appeared in *Vanity Fair*. But in any case, a few minutes grubbing in the library probably could have provided the information. Surely it would have been of interest for readers to know, for example, that the Frances Newman whose attack (in The Atlanta *Constitution*) on *This Side of Paradise* Fitzgerald protests in a 1921 letter to her was herself to become, under the patronage of James Branch Cabell, a notable writer of semi-experimental fiction *(The Hard-Boiled Virgin),* as well as a skilled translator and acerb literary critic, and that her interestingly acid answer to Fitzgerald appears in her own posthumously published letters. Often, Mizener's and Turnbull's biographies will supply surprising revelations about certain letters—for example, that Fitzgerald's urgent letters of 1939 reporting tuberculosis and nervous breakdowns are very largely camouflage for his beginning to drink hard again. But making one's own annotations is an awkward business at best. And if an editor is editing—really—he ought, then, to *edit*. One is driven to the verge of madness by the purity of Turnbull's silence when Fitzgerald writes to his cousin Ceci in 1934 that he has "given up politics" in spite of "the Great Change" he believes in:

> *I have become disgusted with the party leadership* and have only health enough left for my literary work, *so I'm on the sidelines. It had become a strain making speeches at "Leagues Against Imperialistic War,"* and their treatment of the Negro question finished me. *(My italics)*

We are glad, of course, to have these letters in any form, even if only as a perfunctory by-product of Turnbull's work on the biography. But as Turnbull has collected only half of those available, we may hope that a larger, as well as more satisfactorily edited collection will some day be published.

William Goldhurst's *F. Scott Fitzgerald and His Contemporaries,* in spite of its intriguing title, is a great disappointment. What was needed to do a book on such a topic was either lots of new factual material or a capacity in its author for powerful imaginative engagement with the known facts and the uncertain possibilities. Most of Goldhurst's significant facts, and patterns of facts, are the known ones from Mizener, and, alas, the degree of Goldhurst's imaginative engagement with them is nearly invisible. The book gives the impression of advancing some extremely general claims for Wilson, Mencken, Lardner, and Hemingway having had various sorts of literary and intellectual influences on Fitzgerald, and then it blots out the dim outlines even of these ephemera with massive smoke-screens of pseudo-scholarly qualification, hedging, and alternative-sampling. The one little kernel of something swaddled in this book's two hundred and thirty pages of murky theses and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evasive pedantese (i.e., "Critics have noted the marked tendency toward technical innovation and experimentation during the twenties") is a suggestive claim, worth probably a three page note in the back of *PMLA,* that Ring Lardner contributed to the making of *Gatsby* by teaching Fitzgerald to see the corruption of athletics by money as a symbol and index of the more generalized corruption of native American innocence and idealism. But, alas, this isn't much. Goldhurst's book does little more than call attention, negatively, to what *might* be done with this most promising subject, and of course to what has already been done toward it by Fitzgerald's excellent biographers, Mizener and Turnbull.

DENIS DONOGHUE

The Well-Tempered Klavier

THERE IS A DELIGHTFUL ANECDOTE recorded of Nathaniel Lee, who remarked, when confined to a madhouse: "They said I was mad, and I said they were mad, and, damn them, they outvoted me." Northrop Frye cites this to make a point in his new book[1]: I give it here, like Newman's high civility, for its own sake.

Fables of Identity is a selection of Mr. Frye's critical essays, work which has strengthened the profession of letters since 1947. The subtitle of the book is "Studies in Poetic Mythology", and Mr. Frye means what he says: the prudent reader will make his peace with the word "myth" or Mr. Frye will give him no quarter. But I am still not clear as to the basis of Mr. Frye's selection, and the only way to protect the reader from the dismay of finding his favorite essay omitted is to give the titles and pass on. The first Part of the book contains "The Archetypes of Literature", "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement", "Nature and Homer", and "New Directions for Old". These pieces seem to me addenda to *Anatomy of Criticism,* interesting because Mr. Frye wrote them and he has never been dull, but not strictly essential to a theoretical position already expounded. (But I am a biassed witness; my appetite for literary theory is not insatiable.) The second Part consists of "The Structure of Imagery in *The Faerie Queene*", "How True a Twain" (on Shakespeare's Sonnets), "Recognition in *The Winter's*

[1] FABLES OF IDENTITY, by *Northrop Frye.* Harcourt, Brace, and World. $4.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tale", "Literature as Context: Milton's *Lycidas"*, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility", "Blake after Two Centuries", "The Imaginative and the Imaginary", and "Lord Byron". The third Part, which is distinct from the second only because it is pointed toward the twentieth century—or I grievously err—contains "Emily Dickinson", "Yeats and the Language of Symbolism", "The Realistic Oriole: A Study of Wallace Stevens", and "Quest and Cycle in *Finnegans Wake*." (I wish a book of this kind could be published simply as *Selected Essays;* or even, if I were to frame a title, as *Essays in the Grammar of Poetic Symbolism and Mythology.*)

My difficulties with this formidable book begin on the second page:

> Our first step, therefore, is to recognise and get rid of meaningless criticism; that is, talking about literature in a way that cannot help to build up a systematic structure of knowledge.

Yes, but who then shall escape whipping? My own view is that literature is a big country, and we move around in it almost "freely", stopping here and there for the scenery; and perhaps we settle in one place if we like the people and the climate. There is room for everybody. And we can afford to be liberal with one another. "At least I will not have it systematic," Robert Frost said of wisdom itself. Besides, when people tell you to get a system, they usually mean: don't bother, invest in mine.

The trouble about this is that each of us loves his own system, however poor a thing it may be. When Mr. Frye speaks of myth and insists that "the primary business of the critic is with myth as the shaping principle of a work of literature," I suddenly advert to the fact that I never use the term. And I remain distinctly perturbed until Mr. Frye says that myth is much the same thing as Aristotle's *mythos,* "narrative or plot, the moving formal cause which is what Aristotle called the 'soul' of the work and assimilates all details in the realizing its unity." This eases me somewhat, because I have chanted this dark saying as amiably as the next man. But the ease is fitful, because I also know that when Mr. Frye and I think of plot, he speaks with notable disrespect and I am down on my knees in awe; so we cannot have the same object in view. Another version of this rift is that Mr. Frye is interested in "the kind of thing that happens all the time"; I, in the particular thing that happened at one particular time.

Hence Mr. Frye is happy when he has located the category to which his poem belongs; while I am still pestered by the differences between poems in the same category. His motto is: divide and conquer. He loves to divide things into four; two will do, and he mentions that Spenser preferred six. Indeed, Mr. Frye has a good companion in Spenser; a professional, a master of rhetoric, a poet who, as Mr. Frye observes, "thinks inside regular frameworks—the twelve months, the nine muses, the seven deadly sins." In a later essay Mr. Frye remarks

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that "a good deal of our thinking is elaborated from sub-conscious diagrams"; if so, his own issues from a well-wrought Chinese box.

This gives his characteristic work a professional rigor which makes most other work look slack. At his best he is a dazzling critic, a joy to watch, a great athlete. I find most to admire and most to fight against in those essays in which he works out the "philosophy" of a poet's work by charting the crucial symbols. His Ur-model is Yeats's essay on "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry", that grammar-map of Shelley's landscape which marks the caves, rivers, fountains, towers, stars, cups, wolves, deer, the Moon, the Sun. Yeats (Pater's pupil, in concern and method) devotes himself to the concert of Shelley's symbols, and only to the "philosophy" as shadowed in the symbols. Mr. Frye's concerns are similar but more professionally abstemious. When he writes of *The Faerie Queene* he finds the concert of symbols so complete that he refuses to consider the poem unfinished; we are to attend to the poem as a torso, in which Spenser's vision is marvelously fulfilled. The philosophy of Emily Dickinson's poetry is also the concert of her symbols; and Mr. Frye charts these more deftly than any other critic I have read. (This is the best Introduction a reader could want.)

Mr. Frye, then, has a "method". It is a good method for taking in the structure of a poem, the genre, the convention; or when we want to find a path through a jungle of poems. If we go along with the philosophy of Mr. Frye's criticism we shall never again make the mistake of thinking that a poem merely transcribes experience. But Mr. Frye exaggerates, I think, when he implies that the source of one poem is another, or fifty others, of the same genre. And he often confuses his own issue. At one point he says:

> Where we see a landscape, a painter also sees the possibility of a picture. He sees more than we see, and the picture itself is the proof that he really does see it. The standard of reality does not inhere in what is there, but in an unreal and subjective excess over what is there which then comes into being with its own kind of reality.

I cannot praise the last sentence, or the confusion worse confounded when we bring it close to an earlier and better formulation, eight pages back:

> By vision (Blake) meant the view of the world, not as it might be, still less as it ordinarily appears, but as it really is when it is seen by human consciousness at its greatest height and intensity. It is the artist's business to attain this heightened or transfigured view of things, and show us what kind of world is actually in front of us, with all its glowing splendours and horrifying evils.

But my real quarrel with Mr. Frye is that even when he has dealt with the myth, structure, genre, and convention, or when he has shown the concert of leading symbols, I still find that he has left me some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what short of the poetry. Structure is fine, but what about texture? I have often wondered why Mr. Frye so rarely finds it necessary to quote a passage of verse; but the reason is clear, you need to unroll the stuff only if you want to give the reader the feeling of it. And although Mr. Frye occasionally refers to the word-magic of poetry, he rarely discloses magical effects. At one point he says:

> The Adonis myth in *Lycidas* is the structure of *Lycidas*. It is in *Lycidas* in much the same way that the sonata form is in the first movement of a Mozart symphony. It is the connecting link between what makes *Lycidas* the poem it is and what unites it to other forms of poetic experience. If we attend only to the uniqueness of *Lycidas*, and analyze the ambiguities and subtleties of its diction, our method, however useful in itself, soon reaches a point of no return to the poem. If we attend only to the conventional element, our method will turn it into a scissors-and-paste collection of allusive tags. One method reduces the poem to a jangle of echoes of itself, the other to a jangle of echoes from other poets. If we have a unifying principle that holds these two tendencies together from the start, neither will get out of hand.

Not "either-or"; it must be both. Life is very hard. But Mr. Frye himself is sometimes a one-armed pianist; he rarely attends to the uniqueness of *Lycidas*, rarely mentions diction, rarely quotes a phrase.

We need a test case. The essay on Stevens, which was first published in this Review, is one of the strongest things in the book; but a mischievous reviewer of *Fables of Identity* would call upon Stevens to remind Mr. Frye that "the squirming facts exceed the squamous mind," and that while there are many Plantagenet orders, the only order worth having is a disorder great enough. (Let these remarks stand: I have already implied that Mr. Frye's symmetries are a little fearful, his klavier a little too well-tempered, so the mischief is done.)

The philosophy of Stevens' poetry turns out to be the concert of his symbols, featuring the analogy of the four seasons; but focussing on two, Summer and Autumn. In Stevens' Summer vision the poet absorbs the reality he contemplates "as the Angevine absorbs Anjou"; in the Autumn vision, the poet moves darkly between irony and tragedy, emphasizing the minimal role of the imagination as the simple observer of reality. The Autumn vision is pointed toward Winter and death, and it features such symbols as the buzzard, serpent, lion, and the hanged man. As the cycle turns through death to a new life, "we meet images of spring, the central one being some modification of Venus rising from the sea." (Mr. Frye subdivides the Summer vision into two aspects, which he calls the vision of the golden lamp and the vision of the green night: the former exults in the solar hero, "All things in the sun are sun," and so on; the latter features as its leading symbols the Moon, the Evening Star, the student's candle, the "green queen," the interior paramour, and Penelope.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I have two or three comments on this. First, it ignores the actual historical progression of Stevens' poems, from book to book. There is a general indication that the Summer vision predominates from *Harmonium* to *Credences of Summer,* and thereafter we have intimations, auroras, of Autumn. But in illustrating his thesis Mr. Frye takes the symbols where he finds them, on any page of the *Collected Poems.* So we are not to be surprised when the cycle through death to a new life is illustrated by the Venus-like "paltry nude" who is to be inspected on page 5 of the *Poems,* one of the first exhibits of *Harmonium.* Another point: Mr. Frye speaks of the Autumn vision in which the imagination is sufficiently detached from reality to feel that its power of transforming reality has passed by; hence the irony, and the damp tone of such poems as "Man on the Dump" and "Esthétique du Mal." But this takes no account of the fact that in several poems Stevens was quite content with this detachment; he was often happy to acknowledge a reality "independent of our constituting consciousness," a solid reality, as he called it and praised it, "which does not wholly dissolve itself into the conceptions of our own minds." In several poems, notably "The Course of a Particular", "Study of Two Pears", parts of "The Comedian as the Letter C", "Nuances of a Poem by Williams", and "Re-Statement of Romance", Stevens was quite happy with what Mr. Frye calls the minimum role of the imagination. (I am not arguing that these are Stevens' most characteristic poems. Indeed, he was often prepared to sell reality short rather than modify the enormous demands of the imagination. But this is not my dispute.) In the poem which ends

> The pears are not seen
> As the observer wills

the tone is not autumnal, wry, ironic, tragic. For once—but the mood would come again—Stevens is pleased to acknowledge a reality "not ourselves" and in some sense "greater than" ourselves.

A minor point, perhaps. But Mr. Frye is a little too willing to slide over the squirming facts when they complicate the smooth line of his thesis. If Winter comes, Spring is never far behind; just wait and see. As an Introduction to the jungle of Stevens' poems the disputed essay is splendid; the reader who takes it along as his map will be relieved and exhilarated. But when he comes to know Stevens' poems more intimately, so that he doesn't need a map, he will mark several cliffs which Mr. Frye elects to ignore. He may conclude that the poems are still a big country, not easily domesticated; he may wonder about the "MacCullough" of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" and regret that the map doesn't mark him; he may even come to think that many of Stevens' poems are 10% structure, 90% texture, and long to hear an amateur voice talking of them in this way. And at that point he will probably forget, the ingrate, how much he owes the mapmaker.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Everyone's Miscellany

THERE IS AN OLD WORD among theater-goers, designed to help one dodge the bits, fragments, readings, and sketches: "Never go to an evening in the theater that isn't a play." So it might be with readers: "Never read a book of criticism that isn't a book." Collections of essays, done on different occasions, using different premises, handling miscellaneous topics, involving different technical problems, and stitched belatedly together by means of sundry "themes", may just possibly fall into the pattern of a substantial book; but they probably won't. Well, it's four such collections [1] that we have at hand; and at least, the question of what sort of mind does best with this inherently corrupted form may get the materials of an answer.

Mr. Irving Howe leads off with the brightly titled *A World More Attractive*. The phrase comes, I believe, from Trotsky, and invokes the faded, nostalgic enthusiasms of a messianic tradition; but it does not describe very accurately the volume, which comprises a selection of Mr. Howe's incidental articles and reviews over the past fifteen years or so. The last few pages try apologetically to salvage something from the socialist tradition; the rest of the book deals with 19th and 20th century literature, mostly in English, and mostly exemplifying the despair and anguish which Mr. Howe finds characteristic of the modern or post-modern writers. (That they *don't* believe in a world more attractive is practically the essence of their condition.) Most of the essays approach literature via the rather specific aspect of intellectual history, describing the texture of ideas and psychic formulas, rather than verbal patterns. Among the figures handled are T. E. Lawrence, Edith Wharton, Anderson-Hemingway-Fitzgerald-Faulkner, Wright & Baldwin (in a strictly segregated essay on Negro Fiction), and Norman Mailer. There is a section on three American poets (Whitman, Frost, Stevens); a mixed-grill section on "Some European Moderns" (Gissing, Celine, Sholom Aleichem, and "Anti-Utopian" fiction); and then the concluding reflections on the problems of socialism and democracy, justice, freedom, etc.

The best things in the book, it seems to me, are the old-fashioned Life-and-Works essays on Lawrence, Wharton, and Gissing. Making no pretensions to depth of analysis or factual freshness, these studies do a good job of conveying the sense of a personality and the flavor

[1] A WORLD MORE ATTRACTIVE, by *Irving Howe*. Horizon Press. $6.50. THE PROMISED END, by *Stanley Edgar Hyman*. World. $6.50. POETRY AND FICTION, by *Howard Nemerov*. Rutgers Univ. Press. $7.50. ESSAYS ON LITERATURE AND IDEAS, by *John Wain*. St Martin's Press. $5.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of historical circumstances. Mr. Howe is not much given to elaborate or hard-worked interpretations; he doesn't, in fact, take his literature very close to the page, and his tendency is rather to generalize about it than to dig deeply into it. This habit of mind encourages a flexible point of view, a readiness to let the full record speak for itself, which constitutes the best element in these essays. On the other hand, none of Mr. Howe's studies is what one could call "incisive." One doesn't learn anything about Wallace Stevens or Scott Fitzgerald that has not been said a good many times before; in fact, the texture of the writing is so frequently soft, slack, and conversational that one soon ceases to anticipate that much literary work will get done. A major discouragement appears when Mr. Howe comes up against the beat and the out. It's clear he feels uncomfortable in their presence; on the other hand, the sort of bomb he obviously wants to throw might well upset the plaster cast of Dostoevsky over in the corner. So he deals with Mailer and Baldwin very much as my Congressman handled the Russian wheat deal: it's a complicated business, and if it comes out well, he's for it, but on the other hand it may turn out badly and in that case we can't be too careful. I'm aware that this isn't Mr. Howe's general reputation, but on the evidence of this book alone, he seems to have some skill at pussyfooting. So far as memory serves, there are no hard, angular, gritty, specific facts—such as one must or might form a definitive judgment of some sort upon—in the book, at all, at all.

The basic consideration which emerges from Mr. Howe's consideration of "modernity," "post-modernity", and—let's face it, the late sixties are creeping up on us, and what are we going to call them?—is that the modern spirit derives its essential character from the failure of value-systems and the search for new values. For certain controlled purposes, this familiar notion will certainly serve as a workable critical premise; but I am afraid it is one of those generalities which look much more impressive in the abstract than in the specific. It has to be twisted violently to fit such as Hopkins, Eliot, and Waugh; it implies a madly simplistic view of Milton and Rabelais (oldsters whose values were presumably settled and monolithic); and when brought down to detailed applications, it could even be right without leading anywhere in particular. The trouble with Mr. Howe's book is that this idea, and a flock of subordinate little ones, never come up against a fair test of recalcitrant fact. The plan of the book doesn't allow it; the quality of mind doesn't encourage it. And so the ideas, *tels quels,* can at most be "interesting"; they sometimes suggest, generally remind, never convince. A tone of doughy solemnity prevails throughout the collection. For his next volume I hope Mr. Howe picks up some new OK-words; "serious" and "meaningful" get worn to a frazzle in this one.

Mr. Howe has opinions worked into the form of an ideology; Mr. Stanley Edgar Hyman, without by any means lacking opinions, has a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mass of detailed and particular erudition with which to salt his opinionative trail. In fact, Mr. Hyman is an artist in what students of the 17th century will recognize at once as "curious learning"; his intellectual forebears are Robert Burton and Sir Thomas Browne, not to mention Vincent of Beauvais, Isidore of Seville, and the fellow who wrote a treatise on Everything and some other subjects besides. Mr. Hyman's aggressive, cheerful disposition leads him into an extraordinarily varied landscape—into Dead Sea scrolls (for instance), classical dictionaries, church fathers, psychologists, Thoreau, mass culture, Steinbeck, childrearing, Freud, and the modern novel. (Topological, triangulable, differentiable, and combinatorial manifolds he unaccountably neglects.) But he has done a lot of homework for these varied essays, he writes with slashing abandon, and even when one thinks he is being entirely silly, there is something to learn from his performance.

Not that one need take the erudition without discount; it seems to be largely *ad hoc* reading, done in order to "get up" a particular piece, a special interest, or perhaps a college course. The point is hard to document, but one does get a feeling that though Mr. Hyman has read hard and widely among the fashionable books on topics that intrigue him, he hasn't read many of the routine ones, or very deeply in them. He has a pretty ferocious loyalty to cultural anthropology of the Cambridge persuasion, and a report on the progress of the ritual view of myth sounds like an extended communiqué from the Eastern Front. "Our troops executed a series of strategic readjustments on the Totemic and Folkloric fronts; heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. One of our parapsychologists is missing." Nothing can prevent the Dead-Sea-scroll articles from sounding worked-up, and just the least bit presumptuous. As for literature, which might be expected to provide a center of interest, it never really falls into focus. On the evidence, Mr. Hyman is better read, and more interested, in critics than in original texts. There is no essay devoted to a major poet—if John Peale Bishop counts, there is one. No essay on a major or minor playwright; a thirty-page piece of Melville—and very well done, too—concerns his sales and reputation; the essay on Steinbeck manhandles a piece of collaborative non-fiction; and the piece on the modern novel, being concerned with "trends," doesn't get very close to anything in particular. Nobody is bound to know—or consider—everything; for what Mr. Hyman does know, the reader is constantly grateful; the effect I'm trying to define is precisely a lot of brilliantly particular miscellaneous information, gathered in clusters, not always integrated with or applied to other knowledge, and with a sensible deficiency of background in depth and of something else vague that I'll have to call "wisdom."

The best things in the book are, it seems to me, the discussions of Thoreau. Here is a man at whom the official scholarship, in service to a deep American love of the nice and the comfortable, is always nib-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bling away. The cute Thoreau pops up in a thousand guises, pushing his smirking face in front of that sharp-toothed little man with his back to the wall, who is the real or at least the best Thoreau. Mr. Hyman rips zestfully away at the disguises, not without endangering some of Henry's own texts; the resulting image is sparse, aseptic, strong. Mr. Hyman, indeed, has an honest curmudgeonly taste for the uncomfortable; he likes Freud better than the social Freudians, Fowler's *Modern English Usage* better than the permissive handbooks, and the great literary classics because they are satisfyingly grim. This is an athletic and resilient stance, very healthy in a critic; I'm not convinced it represents a full basis for appreciating Lord Byron, *The Tempest,* or *Finnegans Wake.* When one is revolting against sentimentality, it's often hard to avoid sentimentality in reverse.

But the larger issue raised by this criticism is neither erudition nor sentimentality; it is a quality of imaginative vision which enables one to see into the heart of a literary work, which gives one, when it is fully successful, the sense of knowing for the first time what the original work is really doing. One has to ask of all good criticism, does it really return us to the center of the literary process, does it help us to see and to respond freely and fully to what we have seen? Much honorable critical work, brought to this test, takes on a quality of sideshow. Mr. Hyman's title, *The Promised End,* makes somber reference to the Last Judgment (I suppose it is from *Lear,* V, iii); but—colored lights, pinwheels, Roman candles and all—I don't think it is much closer to asking ultimate questions than to giving ultimate answers.

Howard Nemerov—as if he had the titles of Mr. Howe and Mr. Hyman in front of him, and said "Oh, *no!*"—has called his collection by the simple and sufficient name of *Poetry and Fiction.* Before saying anything about Mr. Nemerov's contribution to the volume, I must ask how the Rutgers University Press managed to put out a $7.50 book which, in a copy I received, contained sixteen scattered pages of perfect and absolute blank. Purchasers, as they lay down their deplorable $7.50's, should riffle in search of type through the pages between 84 and 113, at least if they care to know in a consecutive way Mr. Nemerov's opinion of Wallace Stevens, John Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Graves. Meanwhile, back in New Brunswick, Rutgers had better do some penitential reading in the small print of its contract with Quinn & Boden Co., Inc., Rahway, N. J.

Anyone must feel that 381 minus 16 pages is quite a lot of Howard Nemerov; and yet he is a good critic, an honorable, a thoughtful, a hard-working critic. But 25 volumes of modern poetry, lined up in ranks and reviewed for 65 continuous pages, seem like altogether too much of a Good Thing. His opinions of *By Love Possessed,* of a *New York Times* report of a speech by H. J. Muller, of a bad critic of A. E. Housman, his fiction chronicles, his omnibus reviews, his speeches

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to small gatherings. . . . Let us, however, abandon this ungenerous note, and point out that Mr. Nemerov, as literary critic, is categorically and emphatically a Good Thing. (I don't necessarily mean "as book reviewer.") He works close to his texts, whether new or old, whether poetry or prose, and rarely fails to give the impression that he has seen them steadily, generously, fully. Let us suppose that he came upon the task of introducing Longfellow for the Laurel Poetry Series by the Dell paperback outfit, as one generally does come upon these chores, circumstantially. But the appreciation which results (via a good deal of unostentatious hard work) is discriminating and thoughtful, and it has the wholly unexpected result of interesting one in rereading Longfellow. At his best, it makes clear, the old gentleman behind the beard can still give a modern reader authentic poetic pleasure. In this day and age, it is probably mere naïveté (perhaps akin to insult) to praise a critic for revealing to us fresh styles of literary delight; but it can't be helped, Mr. Nemerov will have to be praised in this simple-minded way. His Shakespeare comments are particularly graceful and pointed; there are two careful studies of fiction by Thomas Mann and some deadly truths about translating. His appraisal of Dylan Thomas is a rare and precious effort at critical balance. Mr. Nemerov can say some pretty hard things without seeming to take pleasure in doing so, for he is a critic in service to an ideal of poetry; and even when he is writing about prose, it is the poetry of the work he makes us see. His comparisons light up, his analyses steadily converge and expand (like Stephen Dedalus' equations); his writing at its best is aglow with relevant particulars.

So far on the credit side; the red-ink items are neither many nor major. Especially in the public-statement pieces, Mr. Nemerov falls on occasion into an arch, almost kittenish manner that ultimately grates. Instead of spraying birdshot after the retreating figures of minor versifiers, he should once at least have bucked up against Yeats or Eliot or Pound—who enter the present volume only by the side door of incidental reference. There are a few spots where one can feel the big argument go curiously slack and imprecise, where a lot of shrewd details fail, somehow, to jell into a total statement. The piece on *Light in August,* I am prepared to argue, would have accounted more fully for that book if it had faced more frankly the fact that Faulkner's "dialectic" is truncated and incomplete. Of theses and antitheses there are plenty, but syntheses are remarkably sparse; and the essay doesn't seem to be sure it hasn't found many, or to know where we go from here if it hasn't.

So far the native sons. Here, now, comes a messenger from Sparta (Old Blighty); with bent spear, dirty tunic, and stumbling tongue, John Wain stands ready to deliver his report. It comes out in a high state of confusion, the volume chastely titled *Essays in Literature and Ideas,* the concepts in a state of disarray suggesting catatonia:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The theatre, as understood here for the last hundred years, is evidently dying. . . . Within twenty-five years, if things go on in this way, there will be no live theatre anywhere in England (p. 18).

On the other hand:

> Certainly I myself believe that contemporary English writing, despite the harm done to it by its parasites, can fairly be called abundant, inventive, original, and interesting (p. 55).

But:

> All the arts are in trouble today—that goes without saying; it is the starting-point of all discussion of them—and the reason is that we have evolved a type of society that has no place for art or for the kind of activity that leads up to it (p. 139).

Still:

> The 'fifties in England have not been a decade studded with masterpieces, but they have shown a great deal of activity; the English novel has been given a fresh impetus and so has English poetry; the theatre is more alive than it has been for 100 years; important works have appeared in the spheres of history, biography, and criticism (p. 161).

It doesn't, of course, matter a hoot whether Mr. Wain thinks Brit. lit. as a whole is in flourishing or desperate estate; one can always find reasons to justify either assertion. It's the versatility of the mind one has to admire, that can pull either stop as the needs of the argument impose themselves. If there's a least bad essay in the book, probably the study of Gerard Manley Hopkins will be it; but the eminence is low indeed. Mostly, the book's ideas are shabby and its idiom corrupt beyond the possibility of useful criticism.

Mr. Nemerov and Mr. Hyman clearly carry off the honors in this running of the sweepstakes—and for the simplest and most moral of reasons. They work harder at their criticism than anybody else in the present competition. Maybe in years gone by there was a place between the hard covers of a book for someone's idle hours and casual prejudices; but even then, it never hurt to know something. Particularly if one elects to do the work of what the French unkindly call a *vulgarisateur,* it seems incumbent that one know something that isn't vulgar to begin with. Or, to put the matter another way, it's mostly the fat of one's head that collects when one tries to write off the top of it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HAYDEN CARRUTH

Among Friends

THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REASONS for rejecting the idea that an individual reader may judge an individual poem with complete "objectivity" are many and well-respected. But when it comes to contemporary poetry, there is another reason; we all know it, although we seldom advert to it, except in anger. It is simply this: the world of poetry is such a personal world that poems can never be separated from poets. I do not mean merely that many poets who write about their personal experiences fail, embarrassingly, to give them the esthetic autonomy which works of art require, although this is the truth, but rather that the poets themselves are bound together by too many interpersonal connections. At any rate, this has been my observation during a good many years of reviewing. Not that my circle of friends is so large; but these few friendships ramify outward through diverging other relationships until they encompass the entire literary community in America, with the result that no new book of poetry, even one by a young poet from the other end of the country whose name I have never heard before, can come to me but what I may drop it immediately into this group of friends or that, or sometimes into the group which calls itself my enemies. Every book has its giveaway, something that fixes it firmly here or there: the imprint of its publisher, the biographical note, the author's preface or acknowledgments, the dedications and epigraphs attached to the poems, or simply the obvious stylistic affinities. In this sense, by which I mean nothing invidious, we are a closed world; we are, or ought to be, friends. Of course, all of us from time to time break out of this world by various means, the best being the authority and relevance of our poems, and unless we are exceedingly foolish we shall always welcome others who wish to join our closed world, even if only for an evening. But the gregarious nature of our world ought not to be denied, in which case the pretense of impersonal judgment, which is upheld in even the flimsiest little magazines, seems—well, futile or much worse. Here, at any rate, let's drop it. I am writing as a poet, one among those whose books I am reviewing, and my authority is no more, although I hope no less, than theirs.

A second preliminary. All of us who write books have been victimized at one time or another, I imagine, by reviewers who believe that their primary allegiance is neither to their readers, their publishers, nor their authors; but to themselves. They are out to make their reputations by writing reviews which have a separate esthetic reality, sometimes in sublimity or purity but more often in sarcasm, without regard to the reality of the books under review. This is a malfeasance. Book

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reviews serve a useful function; but book reviewers, like all functionaries, become a nuisance and sometimes a menace when they forget the intrinsically subservient nature of their task.

In short, I am unconvinced by the argument, so often heard, that a bracing literary climate ensues from the punitive and repressive types of criticism, although these are the easiest to write, and in consequence I shall confine my review to the books, or parts of books, which I can praise. Let others deal out the rebukes. Of the thirty-one books submitted to me this quarter, fifteen answer my purpose, and I should think almost anyone would be pleased by such a high proportion.[1]

Partly, but only partly, these exordia have been occasioned by the first book I wish to write about, Henry Rago's *A Sky of Late Summer.* Nearly everyone in the closed world must know that Rago and I are old friends, and in any event I have contributed some blurbage to his dust jacket. No doubt it would be highly improper of me to review his book in the usual way. But I don't see why I should disqualify myself; quite aside from our friendship, I have admired Rago's work for many years; what's more important, I have *known* it for many years, which, on two counts, gives me an advantage over most reviewers and readers: first, Rago has been exceedingly reticent about publishing his work, so that only his friends have known what he was up to over the years; second, his poems are rather difficult, requiring from most readers more time for appreciation than the few weeks usually allotted to reviewers.

At least the main poems are difficult. Rago's book is small, though it contains what he wishes to keep from the period 1949 to the present. Among them are a number of domestic poems, travel poems, epigrams, and incidental statements, most of them beautifully done, but the weight of the book rests, I think, on four poems of larger intent, "A Sky of Late Summer," "The Knowledge of Light," "The Attending," and "The Promising." Without any injustice to Rago, one can say immediately that these poems are in direct descent from the masters of our era, especially Eliot; the intermediates, the Tates, Audens,

[1] A SKY OF LATE SUMMER, by *Henry Rago.* Macmillan. $3.95. NATURAL NUMBERS: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, by *Kenneth Rexroth.* New Directions. $4.50 (paper $1.75). EMBLEMS OF A SEASON OF FURY, by *Thomas Merton.* New Directions. Paper $1.65. COLLECTED POEMS, by *Elder Olson.* University of Chicago Press. $6.50. MY BONES BEING WISER, by *Vassar Miller.* Wesleyan University Press. Paper $1.45. INTERPRETER'S HOUSE, by *William Dickey.* Ohio State University Press. $4.00. BETWEEN MATTER AND PRINCIPLE, by *Alan Stephens.* Alan Swallow. $2.50. A GROUP ANTHOLOGY, edited by *Edward Lucie-Smith* and *Philip Hobsbaum.* Oxford University Press. $3.40. THE AFRICAN BOY, by *E. N. Sargent.* Macmillan. $3.95. MODERN POETRY FROM AFRICA, edited by *Gerald Moore* and *Ulli Beier.* Penguin. Paper 95¢. SELECTED POEMS OF OCTAVIO PAZ, translated by *Muriel Rukeyser.* Indiana University Press. $5.75. MOCKINGBIRDS AT FORT McHENRY, by *Elliott Coleman.* Atlantis Editions. $1.00. 73 POEMS, by *E. E. Cummings.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.50. PATERSON, by *William Carlos Williams.* New Directions. Paper $1.85. A GARLAND FOR DYLAN THOMAS, edited by *George J. Firmage.* Clarke & Way. $6.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thomases, etc., whose appeals have kept so many of us in vacillation (not to say vassalage), have been swept aside by Rago. But in speaking of Eliot, I must make a distinction, for I do not mean Eliot the ironist, the dramatist, the dogmatist, but Eliot the lyricist, the poet of the early "Preludes," parts of "The Hollow Men," the Ariel poems, and the Quartets. Eliot used the lyrical mode infrequently, but demonstrably when he wished to approximate the mysterious, the unsayable; and this is Rago's attainment. Not that Eliot dominates, for there are intimations of Cummings, Williams, and H. D., while the whole style is completely Rago's own, characterized by spareness and purity, reworked until the poet has passed through the phase of revisionary muddle into a higher clarity; which was Horace's objective when he recommended nine years as the term of poetic composition. The unsayable and the poet's need to speak, the poem's closing with silence and going beyond, light sinking into its reflection, these are the elements to which Rago assimilates all knowledge and experience in a song of praise:

To know
Meaning to celebrate:
Meaning
To become "in some way"
Another; to come
To a becoming:
To have come well.

How fully Rago has succeeded in his song of praise will not be decided soon. But I imagine most of us will admire his language, the way he makes the "free" line work as a genuinely constitutive unit, and I don't see how we can fail to find his ambition ingratiating. His poems are nothing but everything. No discourses on dead animals or Baroque paintings, no particularized moral dilemmas, no literary scraps (that whole aspect of Eliot and the tradition has been tossed out peremptorily); but quite simply: reality. In spite of the overbrimming number of poems we now have in the so-called neometaphysical manner, I know no one who has so simply yet so comprehendingly lyricized the metaphysical imagination.

In the case of Kenneth Rexroth, I know no one who has so simply and comprehendingly lyricized nature; which seems the wildest imaginable exaggeration when you consider the line of nature-minded esthetes from Wordsworth down. Or from Thomson perhaps, or Drayton; or, to get to the root of the matter, Jakob Böhme. The point is that even though one of his book titles does suggest Böhme's *Signatura Rerum,* Rexroth has evaded the symptomatic arrogance of this tradition, the warping of natural felicity toward moralistic or esthetic ends. At his best, Rexroth speaks, in a sense, not poetically but objectively, with a naturalist's exacting love:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fate pauses for us in imagination,
As it shall not ever in reality—
As these swifts that link endless parabolas
Change guard unseen in their secret crevices.
Other anniversaries that we have walked
Along this hillcrest through the black fir forest,
Past the abandoned farm, have been just the same—
Even the fog necklaces on the fencewires
Seem to have gained or lost hardly a jewel;
The annual and diurnal patterns hold.
Even the attrition of the cypress grove
Is slow and orderly, each year one more tree
Breaks ranks and lies down, decrepit in the wind.
Each year, on summer's first luminous morning,
The swallows come back, whispering and weaving
Figure eights around the sharp curves of the swifts,
Plaiting together the summer air all day,
That the bats and owls unravel in the nights.

This, from a poem published in 1944, is Rexroth *par excellence,* "slow and orderly," giving us simple actualities of nature which combine, at length and as if of their own accord, in a convincing prehension of unity, acceptance, and calm. Technically speaking, the verse is brilliant; its evident modernity is nevertheless close kin to classicism (hendecasyllabics by count) and to the Renaissance tradition (blank verse to the ear). Yvor Winters once said that, in "Sunday Morning," Wallace Stevens had written the best strictly metered blank verse of our time; in the same sense Rexroth has written the best loosely metered blank verse of our time; and it is significant that neither poet chose to remain long in his excelling mode. Nevertheless, "Sunday Morning" is Stevens' best-known work, and of Rexroth I have chosen these lines from all his *Natural Numbers,* which is a volume of new and selected old poems. The most interesting recent work in the book is quite different, a section of short pieces based on the music of Ornette Coleman. Nervous, evocative, experimental, and mostly unsuccessful, two or three of these, even so, hold promise of something new and good. As in his work with nature, Rexroth has had the intelligence not to draw his "inspiration" directly from the music, but to trace Coleman's powerful voice (you can't call his playing anything but chanting) to a source, from which the poems may be derived by collateral descent. In my judgment, this is the only feasible method of interplay between poetry and the other arts.

Thomas Merton's work offers an analogous example. His new book, *Emblems of a Season of Fury,* is mistitled, I think, because it sounds as if the fury were Merton's. Granted, fury is one touchstone of religious feeling; but Merton's sensibility, as expressed in his devotional poetry, has always appeared calm. Now this calm seems to have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

deepened into an immense impersonal serenity, to such a degree that his new religious poems are notably less interesting than those of a decade ago, which I think remain the best religious writing of our time. It is as if Merton has proceeded so far in his contemplative vocation that he really has nothing left to say, which perhaps is the goal of monastic asceticism: the point at which the silence of penance and discipline is exchanged for the silence of repletion. The fury of the title, therefore, is the world's, not Merton's; the fury of racism, the fury of the bomb; and the tension in Merton's book comes from the contrariety of his need for silence and his need to speak out. As a matter of fact, the most moving piece in the book, to my mind, is a long poem called "Hagia Sophia," which deals more or less expressly with this tension and which also, though in somewhat concealed terms, seems to deny what I have always thought to be, after all, the inescapable principle of monasticism: segregation. How far can the monk cross over, through the Word, under the leadership of Maria Sophia, Our Lady of Wisdom, and still be a monk? It is an interesting question, not to say excruciating. Other related poems in the book, some very fine, deal with refugees, children, the sin of Ixion, the error of technology, and so on; and there are also a large number of adaptations and translations, chiefly from Central American poetry, of which the most interesting are translations from the work of Alfonso Cortes, the insane Nicaraguan poet, full of strangely interfused visions and clichés.

These three, then: Rago, Rexroth, Merton, poets of the metaphysical, natural, and religious worlds. Please don't mistake me; each is a poet first and a fine one, as far as we know them on the page. But I think their exceptional value to us comes from their having put their talents and sensibilities to the service of something—call it The Impersonal—beyond the page. Now we arrive at the literary poets; and I'm afraid that, fine as they are and much as I enjoy parts of their work, I cannot call them exceptional at all.

However, I said I wouldn't be censorious, and the injunction, to tell the truth, is simple enough to obey in the present instances. Elder Olson's *Collected Poems* gives us a good view of his work, most of which is admirable. His ideas are conventional and I should say derivative, the inconclusive flirtation with belief to which we have become accustomed, set out in capitalized abstractions like Necessity, Being, Evil, etc. But the obvious point is worth making, that the poet may perfectly well feel his conventions and that, in the particular experience, they may shed their conventionality and come alive. This happens in parts of "The Cock of Heaven," "The Midnight Meditation," and a few other poems. Olson has an easy flow of language, too easy sometimes, but this gives him an aptitude for experiments with dramatic and novelistic methods in verse, all to the good; and he has an eye for descriptive detail. In fact, several poems about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

winter in the rural north, closely observed, strike me as among the most genuine things in the book, and I wish he had done more of them.

On the cover of Vassar Miller's *My Bones Being Wiser,* a collection of new poems, is a quotation to the effect that in her work "form and content wrestle in joy and mystery like Jacob and the angel." If so, it is the coziest wrestling I ever saw; Jacob and the angel are caught in the poem's crushing elegance, and are quite content to be so. The poet has brought the mode of conceit to a feminine finicality of intellectual grace which, I should say, will never be surpassed; and it is just right, without a doubt, for the grieving, reluctant, shy, but steadying quality of her religious enthusiasm:

I walk with my head in the air.
For if I look below,
God, Thou art also there.
Lord, how far must I go
Down on my knees in likeness,
A little, of Thy meekness?

I walk with my head held all proud.
Ashamed to look shamefaced,
I cry my worth aloud,
Since God alone is graced
With lowliness, till I stumble
Over the Most High humble.

Lord, dare I crawl on my knees?
I find Thy cross thereunder,
My ease is my unease,
Thy whisper strikes with thunder
Thy poor competitor
Meek but by metaphor.

There is so much here, so much of crossed meanings and emotions, cast in the crossed rhythms, that the elegance is genuinely animated, even to the extent of transporting, if not transforming, the silliness and verbal bad taste of the ninth line. Yet the elegance remains in my mind after the ideas of shame, stumbling, and unease fall below resonance, which they do, as a matter of fact, rather quickly; and in her other poems, especially those of erotic grief, turning on themes of thwarting and jealousy, Miller's tone destroys the very commitment to whatever it is—let's say dishevelment—that might make her sexuality not only credible but important enough to sustain the labor of poetry.

William Dickey's poems have a rougher surface, as they should, and at the same time a touch of volubility, of gab, which I find attrac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive as long as the diction is kept reasonably concrete; this isn't always the case, and in some poems one cannot avoid feeling that the surface is a calculated effect, not sprung from the suffered experience of the poem. That the experience was there and was suffered one cannot doubt, if only for the way images of blindness and failing light recur in almost every poem, usually unobtrusively and as if the poet does not recognize the recurrences, giving the whole book, *Interpreter's House,* a certain consistent depth. Some poems, quite a few, are turgid and forced, and I do not like them; but others have a quick rightness that catches me by surprise. For instance, the one called "Not This":

What I intended was not this
Grey absence when the heart declines
Like a spent flower upon its stalk,

The bent, the reprimanded head.

What I intended was to say,
Not in all things perfection lies,
Nor are our human reasons pure—

But you set out, as from some shore
Obsidian-sharp, at once to sea,
Where the most drowning waters are.

It was not meant so finally.

Meant as a thesis, not yet proved,
A speculation, hardly said,
The merest whisper of a voice—

But at the sound you bowed your head.
The universal darkness fell
And landscape shattered to a close.
The frozen eyes of hell arose
And glittered where the stars had been.
Calamity undid the moon.

What I intended was not this.

Nor will I think those thoughts again.

This contains, I think, a common, instinctive movement of guilt, the futile self-explanation, and does it unreflexively, without tedium, without irony or calculation, at least up until those images of blind calamity at the end, which I should have preferred if they were simpler. (The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moon has been undone in so many poems that if the space people don't hurry up there won't be anything left.)

With Alan Stephens we revert to strict formalism, even in his "free" poems; his work is low-keyed, not likely to move many readers, nor, I think, intended to. It is poetry for the few who enjoy reading poetry, not for what they read, not for what they feel, but simply for the effect of language minutely controlled. To my mind, the most enjoyable poem in *Between Matter and Principle* is a versification of a passage from John Muir's diary. This seems to me a more legitimate "literary" usage than the slyly derivative poem or half-hidden allusion which we have all come to dislike, though many of us find it hard to break the habit: a candid exercise in rewriting—in effect, translating—a favorite work of prose. I wonder why it isn't done more often.

I haven't much room left, but I do want to mention a number of additional books. First, *A Group Anthology,* which presents work by seventeen young poets writing in England, though they are not all English. This is the freshest and liveliest book I have seen from England in some years; I recommend it wholeheartedly. It is exuberant, original, full of good topical poetry. None of these poets has, so far, the bare compositional or intellectual power of a Heath-Stubbs, a Gunn, or a Tomlinson; but one or two of them will probably reach it soon, in which case the "predestined renewal" of English poetry toward which Marius Bewley pointed in the Autumn, 1963, issue of this magazine may be already half upon us. E. N. Sargent's *The African Boy* is a curious book, opening with a section of poems spoken by an African girl as she undergoes a series of tribal scarification rites; they fail (the poems) essentially for the same reason that *Hiawatha* fails, a lack of indigenous psychology; yet they are extremely well done; and later in the book a section of more personal poems, effectively cast in drum rhythms, celebrates an American poet's transcultural "affair" with Africa. These are better than most of the actual native poems in *Modern Poetry from Africa,* an anthology which, although it contains work by Senghor, David Diop, and a marvelous Nigerian poet hitherto unknown to me, Christopher Okigbo, does not live up, in a purely literary sense, to its editors' high claims. The interplaying issues raised by these two books, the American and the African, are crucial. Most of the poems in the anthology are interesting, even when they are unskillful, and show that the Africans have been more adventurous in their use of European languages than, say, the Anglo-Indians.

Last year Muriel Rukeyser brought out her translation of *Piedra del Sol,* by Octavio Paz, which I thought excellent. Now she gives us further selections from all the Mexican poet's works, in a generous bilingual edition, also excellent for the most part, although the earlier poems have been more than justifiably coerced toward Rukeyser's own mannerisms. The importance of Paz cannot be doubted; he is perhaps the youngest of the great expressionist adventurers, of whom Gottfried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Benn was the paragon, those who strove, before existentialism, to escape from indispensable nihilism through the self-factive powers of style; one may deplore this attempt as futile and irresponsible—at any rate, that is my belief—but one cannot deny its brilliance or pervasiveness. It is good to have these intelligent and sensitive translations, even if the Spanish on the facing pages reminds us continually that the sounds and rhythms of the two languages are impossibly remote.

Elliott Coleman's *Mockingbirds at Fort McHenry* is an experimental, elliptical poem in 67 brief sections, composed in a kind of discrete pointillism which I do not understand, but which is seriously intended and no doubt clear as day to less literal-minded readers than I. E. E. Cummings's poems really are as clear as day, or clearer, and the more literal-minded you are the better, provided you have a touch of music about you as well. Effrontery would be what I would call any attempt to sandwich an adequate comment on Cummings into a review of this type, and so I simply point out that his *95 Poems* contains work done between 1958 and his death, some of which is equal to anything he wrote earlier; the book is a wonder. Many readers will also wish to know that the whole of W. C. Williams' *Paterson,* including the postscriptive Book V and four pages of drafts and notes for an intended Book VI, found among the poet's papers after his death, is now available in one paperback volume. Finally, there is *A Garland for Dylan Thomas,* an attractively designed commemorative volume on the tenth anniversary of Thomas's death, containing poems written in tribute to him by seventy-eight other poets. Frankly, most of the poems are awful, as Thomas would have declared right off—I could nearly see his sneer hovering between the book and me as I thumbed through—but it's a nice idea anyway, and devotees of Thomas will be interested, I am sure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VIVIAN MERCIER

The "Dark" Ages Could Be Golden Too

AT THE BEGINNING of Professor Bieler's admirable book [1] there is an instructive map showing "the most important centres of Irish-Christian influence." The righthand half of this map contains a number of places that we have all heard of—Paris, Ghent, Cologne, Strasbourg, Berne, Milan, Rome, Naples, Salzburg, Vienna—along with many others less familiar. Kiev, too, I might have mentioned, except that it is too far east to find room on the map. In the top lefthand corner is Ireland, crowded with the names of places from which this influence spread. I give the list in full: Derry, Armagh, Bangor, Aran, Durrow, Kells, Monasterboice, Clonfert, Clonmacnoise, Clonard, Glendalough, Innisfallen, Lismore. Derry is a fair-sized port, Armagh the Irish ecclesiastical equivalent of Canterbury, Kells the place associated with the *Book of Kells,* which is perhaps the most remarkable illuminated manuscript in the world; but who besides a specialist has ever heard of the other places? Clonmacnoise and Glendalough both offer acres of ruins in the midst of a green desert; Clonard has two green mounds and an old font; a single high cross remains at Durrow; Clonfert Cathedral consists of a magnificent Romanesque doorway leading into a tiny parish church.

This map presents graphically an extraordinary historical phenomenon: a cultural tidal wave swept into Ireland from the Mediterranean, flooding all before it, and then rolled back whence it came, leaving only a few tiny pools behind. Just before the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, Mediterranean civilization was brought peacefully to Ireland by St. Patrick and other Christian missionaries. Not having been imposed by Roman militarism, it mingled amicably with the existing Celtic culture and produced a fascinating hybrid species, Early Irish Christian civilization. This hybrid left a distinctive mark on almost every cultural area of its time: liturgy, hagiography, penitential literature, apocalyptic visions and, in the works of Johannes Scotus Eriugena, theology on a high philosophical plane; poetry, both religious and secular, in Gaelic and Latin, of great psychological and metrical subtlety; "the first abstract art in the history of Christendom"—Bieler's words—as exemplified in book illumination, the metalwork of chalices and reliquaries, and the earlier carved stone high crosses; and a socio-legal synthesis adapting the pa-

[1] IRELAND: HARBINGER OF THE MIDDLE AGES, by *Ludwig Bieler*. Oxford University Press. $12.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gan Celtic legal system to a society in which Christian clerics occupied the place formerly held by the druids.

Once the barbarian conquests of Continental Europe and Britain had been completed, Irish missionaries began to return the precious gifts of religion and culture to their source. The first step was St. Columba's conversion of the Picts in southern Scotland at the end of the sixth century. (How many Scotsmen and others named "Malcolm" know that their name means "servant of Columba"?). From there St. Aidan brought Christianity to northern England in the seventh century. St. Columbanus went still farther afield early in the same century, bringing his fine Latin scholarship and rigorous monastic rules first to France and then to northern Italy, while his disciple St. Gall branched off into Switzerland. Wave after wave of Irishmen, lay as well as clerical, followed the pioneers, spreading ever more widely over the Continent. In the ninth century we find Eriugena translating and even writing Greek at the court of Charles the Bald; Bishop Donatus of Fiesole, near Florence, writing a classical Latin epic on dear St. Brigit of Kildare, who hung her clothes to dry on a sunbeam; and a monk of Reichenau putting down among his lecture notes the single most famous Gaelic lyric poem, "Pangur *Bán* and I," which compares the scholar's quest for knowledge with the quest for mice of his white cat, Pangur.

Meanwhile, the Norsemen were reducing the old cultural centers in Ireland to heaps of ruins. A Viking would snatch up a jewelled reliquary and bring it home to his wife or mistress as a trinket-box, after tossing the priceless manuscript it contained into a burning church. Eventually, only a tiny handful of pre-twelfth-century manuscripts survived in Ireland. When, in the 1840's and 1850's, Johann Kaspar Zeuss reconstructed the grammar of Old Irish (the Gaelic of 600-900), he worked exclusively in Continental libraries; had he been able to visit Ireland, only the *Book of Armagh* would have been of real value to him.

Early Irish Christian civilization, which had fallen into decay during the Norse invasions, struggled bravely to renew itself in the twelfth century, only to fall before a new invasion, that of the Anglo-Normans. Gaelic secular culture held firm, but the new Christian conquerors brought Continental influences that were too strong for the Church in Ireland. Irish ecclesiastical art and literature soon became virtually indistinguishable from their Continental European counterparts, while the hybridization of Latin and Gaelic, clerical and secular elements passed into history.

Professor Bieler has produced, in effect, not one book but two. If we consider the text only, the publishers are perhaps justified in classifying it under the heading "Religion," though that term, in the period 400-1200, covers almost every aspect of life, from "social studies" to music. (One of Professor Bieler's most surprising conjectures is that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ireland might have given polyphony to the Middle Ages. . . .") For instance, we learn that Dicuil, an Irishman, wrote "the best book on geography during the early Middle Ages. . . ," or that the earnest St. Columbanus showed familiarity with the poems of pleasure-loving Horace, "who seems to have found no readers between Columbanus and the Irish scholars of the ninth century." If Professor Bieler tells us that the practice of private confession was one of Ireland's most important contributions to Roman Catholicism, he also writes, "It is more than likely that the Irish made an original contribution to medieval Latin poetry which was to be of the greatest importance in the future, namely the rhyme as a formal element of verse." (By the way, even the Gaelic word for "confessor" has a poetic flavor: *anmchara,* "soul-friend.")

Professor Bieler's choice of illustrations, however, will make many readers feel that this is also one of the outstanding art books of the year. A Swiss firm has been making remarkable color facsimiles of the *Book of Kells,* the *Lindisfarne Gospels,* and other Irish or Irish-influenced illuminated manuscripts, but at prices reckoned in hundreds of dollars. If I am not mistaken, some of the pages from these facsimile editions are used by Bieler, along with other color photographs of the highest quality. The "abstract" reproductions from the *Book of Durrow,* the oldest of the elaborate manuscripts and the most likely to have been executed entirely in Ireland, are particularly interesting. Readers will probably find some from the *Book of Kells* more familiar, though the less spectacular pages reproduced from it here are both less hackneyed and, to me at least, more deeply satisfying. The color plates from the *Lindisfarne Gospels* provide a fine contrast, with their lighter colors and more restrained decoration. The book also contains a number of effective black-and-white glossy photographs showing monastic sites, round towers and high crosses; some color photographs of metalwork; and a number of black-and-white ornaments in the margins of the text, along with reproductions of important manuscript material. This is a book through which one can either read or rubberneck. Furthermore, it proves not only that the Irish had a golden age but that the gold was even purer than the Irish say it was.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW DIRECTIONS BOOKS • Spring/Summer

Williams

THE MILK TRAIN DOESN'T STOP HERE ANYMORE by Tennessee Williams. Newly rewritten for publication. $3.75 (Feb.)

THREE PLAYS by Tennessee Williams. *The Rose Tattoo, Camino Real, Sweet Bird of Youth* together in one volume. $5.00 (Apr.)

IN THE WINTER OF CITIES. Collected Poems by Tennessee Williams. Includes five new poems. Paperbook, $1.50 (June)

Lewis

THE LETTERS OF WYNDHAM LEWIS. Edited by W. K. Rose. Letters to Pound, Eliot, Joyce, etc. from this famous revolutionary in art and writing. 16 Illus. $8.50 (Mar.)

Owen

COLLECTED POEMS by Wilfred Owen. Edited, with an Intro. by C. Day Lewis. Definitive edition, with new material. $4.75 (Mar.)

Smith

SELECTED POEMS by Stevie Smith. First publication here of this mischievous but penetrating poet. Illus. by author. Paper Orig., $1.50 (Apr.)

Edson

THE VERY THING THAT HAPPENS by Russell Edson. Intro. by Denise Levertov. Fables and drawings—"As if King Lear had been written by Edward Lear." Paper Orig., $1.60 (Apr.)

Hesse

SIDDHARTHA by Hermann Hesse. New cloth gift ed. of this famous bestseller. $5.00 (May)

Levertov

O TASTE AND SEE by Denise Levertov. New collection of poems by the author of *The Jacob's Ladder.* $3; Paperbook, $1.50 (May)

German Poetry

AN ANTHOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY GERMAN POETRY. Edited & translated by G. C. Schwebell. Intro. by Victor Lange. Bilingual. Notes. Bibliography. Paperbook Original, $2.75 (May)

Anthology

NEW DIRECTIONS 18. Edited by James Laughlin. The latest ND anthology of experimental and unconventional prose and poetry. $5; Paperbook, $2.25 (June)

Pound & Spann

CONFUCIUS TO CUMMINGS: An Anthology of Poetry. Edited by Ezra Pound and Marcella Spann. Pound's choice of the poetry of various ages and cultures. Comments by Pound. $6.75; Paperbook, $2.75 (June)

Choromanski

JEALOUSY AND MEDICINE. A novel by Michal Choromanski. First American publication of a much acclaimed Polish novel. $4.50; Paperbook, $1.70 (July)

Adigal

SHILAPPADIKARAM: The Ankle Bracelet by Prince Ilango Adigal. Translated by Alain Danielou. This epic romance is one of the great classics of Indian culture, giving a vivid picture of early Tamil life in all its aspects. $4; Paperbook, $1.65 (July)

Nicklaus

THE MAN WHO BIT THE SUN by Frederick Nicklaus. First book of poems by a young American. Paper Gift Edition, $1.50 (Aug.)

ND Paperbooks

WYNDHAM LEWIS by Hugh Kenner $1.75 (Mar.)

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS by the Kenyon Critics. $1.50 (Mar.)

THE SHELTERING SKY by Paul Bowles. $1.85 (Mar.)

BIG SUR & THE ORANGES OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH by Henry Miller $2.45 (Apr.)

SELECTED POEMS by Kenneth Patchen $1.50 (Apr.)

Order ND Books from the distributors, J. B. Lippincott Company, E. Washington Square, Philadelphia 5, Pa. / NEW DIRECTIONS 333 — 6 Ave., N.Y. 14

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW DUTTON PAPERBACKS

SAMUEL BECKETT:
THE LANGUAGE OF SELF

by **Frederick J. Hoffman.** A trenchant critique of Beckett's novels and plays as an expression of his own and the 20th-century's sense of self-doubt, isolation, and despair.

D-143 $1.25

THE DARK LABYRINTH

By Lawrence Durrell. A fascinating early novel by the author of *Justine* about a group of English people, on tour to regain mental peace, who become trapped in a maze on Crete.

D-134 $1.35

THE KAMA SUTRA OF VATSYAYANA

Translated by Sir Richard Burton, with a *Foreword by Santha Rama Rau.* The famous translation of this ancient Indian classic on love and social conduct.

D-139 $1.25

WAGNER ON MUSIC AND DRAMA

A Compendium of Richard Wagner's Prose Writings. Selected, arranged, and edited with an introduction by Evert Sprinchorn and Albert Goldman. A unique abridgement of Wagner's voluminous prose contribution to the intellectual and musical life of the 19th century.

D-135 $2.75

HENRY JAMES: SELECTED FICTION

Edited with an introduction and notes by Leon Edel. Selections from the finest stories and novels by one of the greatest modern prose masters. Includes James' "The Art of Fiction."

D-140 $1.95

THE SPACE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

Edited by Sir Harold Spencer Jones, et al. Over 700 entries, and 320 illustrations, maps and diagrams in this invaluable reference guide to space research and astronomy.

D-141 $2.45

THE DONKEY INSIDE

By Ludwig Bemelmans. With illustrations by the author, this enchanting account of travels in Ecuador is "as deft and intimate a portrait as a country could ever hope to sit for."—*Time*

D-142 $1.35

THE WORLD OF LAWRENCE DURRELL

Edited with an introduction by Harry T. Moore. Henry Miller, George Steiner, Bonamy Dobrée, Cecily Mackworth, Carl Bode, Lionel Trilling, and others explore Durrell's prose and poetry in 17 essays.

D-144 $1.35

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LITERATURE

Edited with an introduction by Hendrik M. Ruitenbeek. A fascinating analysis showing how some of the world's great literature reflects psychoanalytic concepts. Contributors include Lionel Trilling, Alfred Kazin, Ernest Jones, Kenneth Burke.

D-145 $2.25

At better bookstores:

E.P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

201 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10003

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED